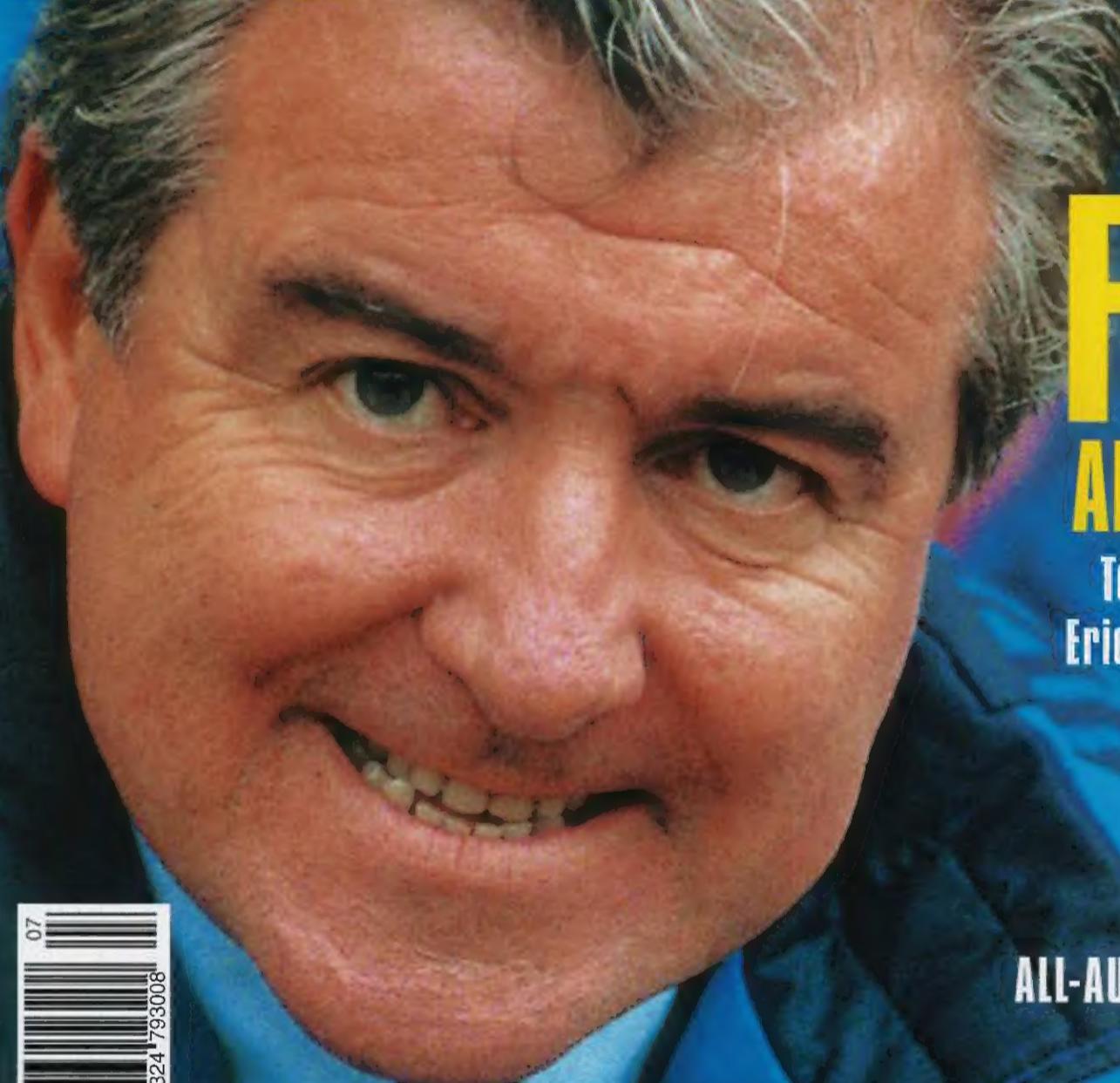


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the Socceroos look to France 98





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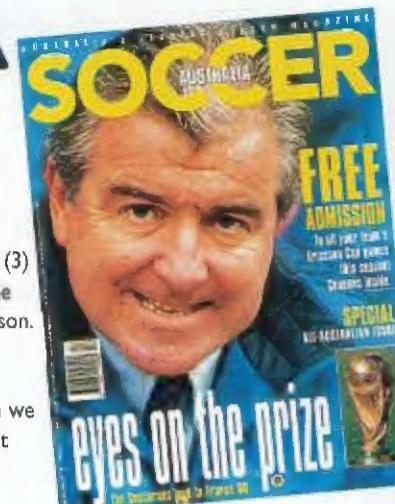
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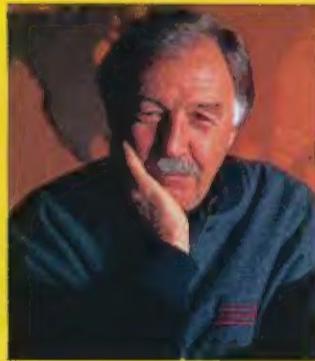


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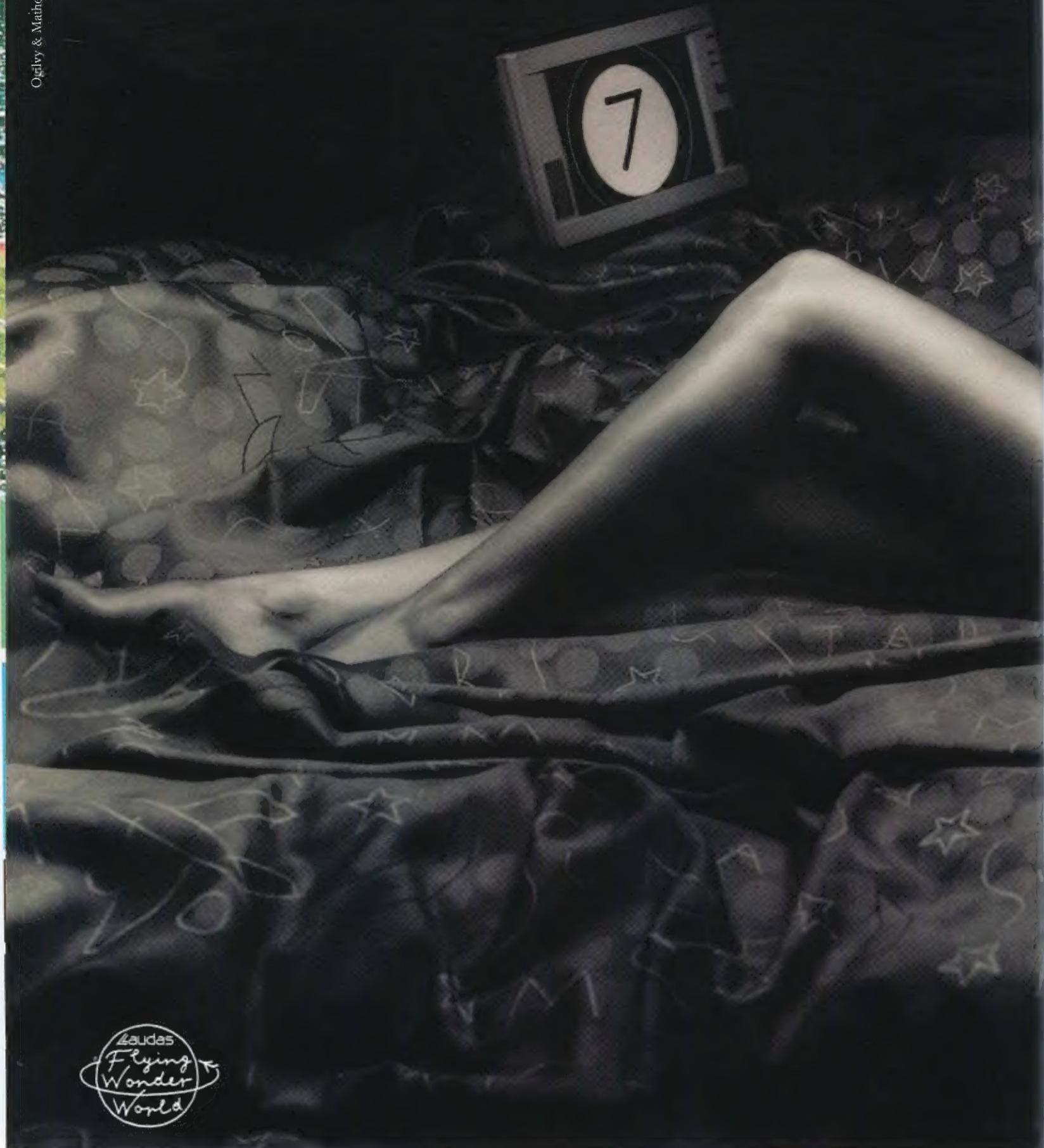
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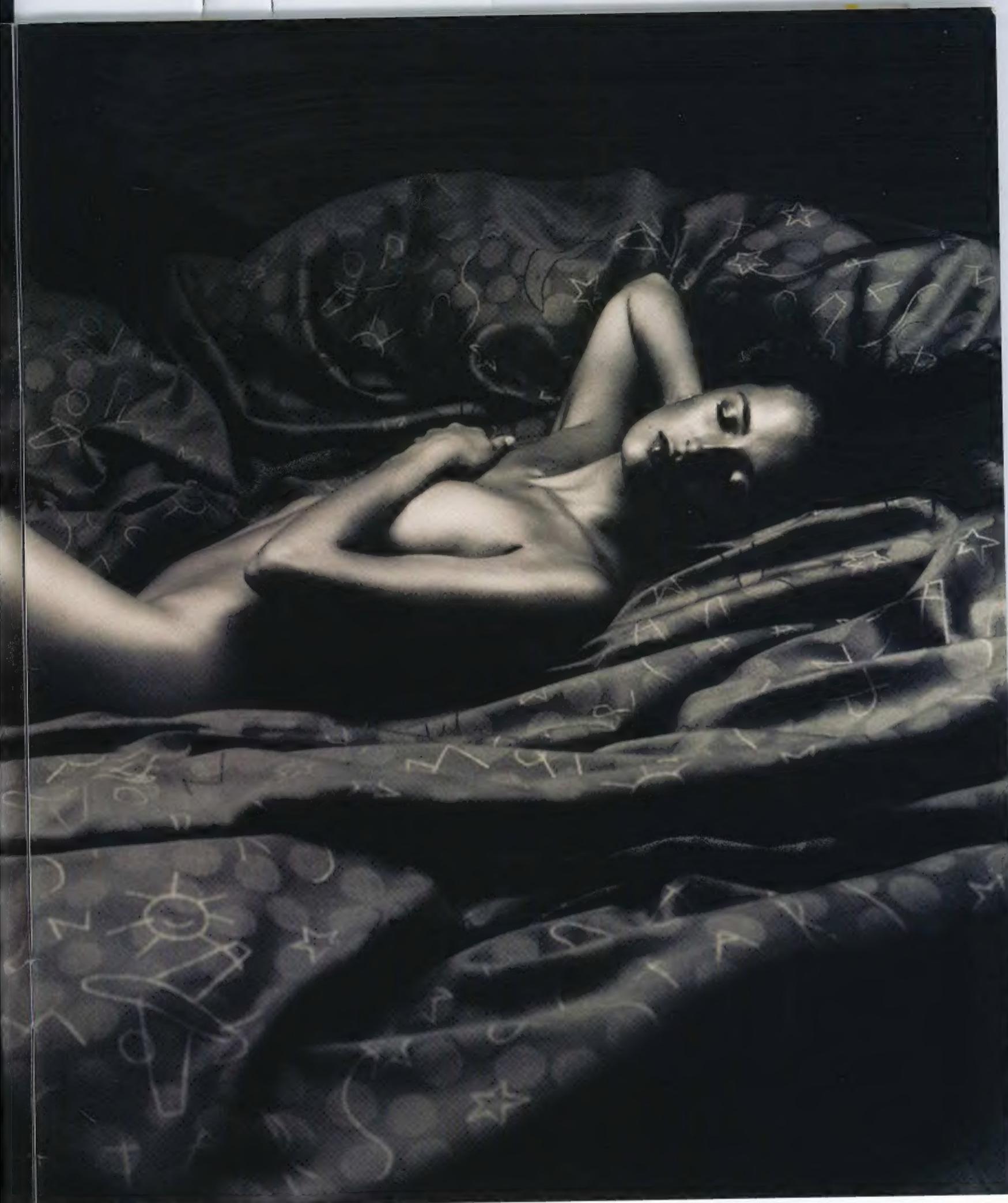
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Melbourne magic

The Melbourne Cricket Ground is gearing up to host its first ever World Cup soccer match.
PATRICK MANGAN reports.

The old stadium probably thought it had seen it all by now - Bradman at the crease, Ron Clarke igniting the Olympic flame, performances by Pavarotti, U2 and Madonna, not to mention Pope John Paul II.

But the latest holy grail being pursued at the Melbourne Cricket Ground is virgin territory for Australia's largest and most

imposing sporting edifice - a place in the World Cup finals.

On 29 November 1997, the MCG plays host to the final qualification game for the most sought-after sporting trophy on the planet, when the Socceroos take on the fourth-best team Asia has to offer.

Pundits around the country were taken

aback when Melbourne was chosen as the venue for probably the most important soccer game played in Australia in a quarter of a century.

Critics pointed to the woeful attendances at Socceroo games held in Melbourne in recent years. During the last World Cup campaign in 1993, a crucial clash with New Zealand



proved to be a claustrophobic's paradise as barely 12,000 turned out to see Australia turn over the Kiwis 3-0.

But possibly the most glaring example of Melbourne's soccer indifference had been five years earlier when an even smaller crowd dotted the windy expanse of Olympic Park as Romario's Brazil strutted their stuff.

Melbourne, however, has a new-found reputation as the one-off spectacular capital of Australia, and in the last two years the city has staged the Australian Grand Prix, Bledisloe Cup and rugby league State of Origin games with impressive attendances across the board. It's little wonder that Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett has expressed confidence in the success of a World Cup match at the 100,000 capacity stadium.

"There is no better ground to be playing one of the most popular sports in the world than the MCG," he said recently. "It's not that this event is being held in Melbourne, that isn't

the important issue at all.

"It is being held at the mecca of sport in Australia in front of an audience larger than any other venue can hold. This stadium will give vocal and physical support in numbers unequalled anywhere else in Australia for Alex (Tobin) and his team."

Soccer Australia chairman David Hill is no doubt relieved that the Victorian Government is underwriting an attendance of at least 62,000, and as a rugby sympathiser Hill has observed closely the almost supernatural attraction a big event holds for Victorian sports followers.

"Melbourne has a terrific record in staging these huge events successfully," said Hill, conscious of the financial bonanza swept down the drain when the Socceroos' Sydney Football Stadium confrontation with New Zealand was washed out in July. "All the indications are that we should expect to get a sellout crowd."

The MCG is set to join Wembley, the

Maracana and the Bernabeu as a World Cup football venue and the grand old lady of Australian sport will never have seen anything quite like it.

A ground record 121,000 spectators witnessed the 1970 VFL Grand Final between Carlton and Collingwood, but come 29 November over 100 nations across the planet will watch 11 Australians kick a soccer ball around a paddock against Asian opposition. It's a completely different ball game, in more ways than one.

The Melbourne Cricket Ground, echoing already with the glorious exploits of Australian heroes Don Bradman, Herb Elliott, Betty Cuthbert and Ron Barassi is a fitting location for our Socceroos to do battle for the final place in the last major sporting event of the second millennium.

The people of Melbourne, and the millions watching throughout Australia and the rest of the world, are in for an unforgettable night.



With the Socceroos close to clinching a place at France 98, PHILIP MICALLEF looks at the pressures facing coach Terry Venables as D-day approaches.

Terry Venables is on a hiding to nothing as he takes his resurgent Socceroos into the final qualifying tie for a place in the World Cup in France.

Venables, a coach highly regarded in the world of football, is putting together the final details in the preparation for what are shaping up as the two most important games in the history of Australian soccer.

Sure, the Socceroos have played in bigger games, not least in 1974 when they actually performed in the finals against East Germany, West Germany and Chile.

On Australian soil, few people will forget those two memorable games with Scotland in Melbourne in 1985 and Argentina in Sydney in 1993 that for a fleeting moment captured the imagination of indifferent mainstream Australia.

But this time a lot more hinges on the outcomes of our two-leg playoff with the fourth-placed Asian team.

Australia meets an as yet to be determined Asian side on 22 and 29

November, the return leg to be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Whereas Australia was not expected to win any of those matches against some of the world's most powerful soccer nations, this time we are expected to prevail.

We must win and get through to France because the repercussions for the game could be drastic should we fail.

Firstly, soccer is on the brink of an

With an expensive coach to pay and an escalating players' bill, the Socceroos must reach the French finals at all costs.

exciting new era.

An administration that has given the game a breath of fresh air and a big-name coach who is beginning to harness the special skills of our elite players have given our sport a new sense of direction.

Even though high drama politics and controversy are never far from the game,

there is no doubt a perception exists among ordinary Australians that the sport is turning the corner. And not before time too.

But make no mistake, failure to reach the finals would undo all the good work that has been done in the last few years.

Second, it is no secret that Soccer Australia's coffers are not exactly overflowing with money.

The poor quality of the opposition in our World Cup campaign gave us a few easy wins but understandably did not draw big crowds. Even the traditional grudge confrontation with New Zealand turned into a fizzer after Australia's comprehensive 3-0 rout of the Kiwis in Auckland.

The last thing Soccer Australia needs at the end of a costly campaign is elimination at this final, crucial hurdle.

With an expensive coach to pay and an escalating players' bill, the Socceroos must reach the French finals at all costs to enable Soccer Australia to get its hands on the \$3 million FIFA will distribute to each participating country.

Assistant coach Raul Blanco concedes the pressure on the Socceroos is building but he is confident of success.

"It's a very big challenge and we're under pressure but that's part of our job," he said.

History bed



"We're on the right track and it is important we remain focused."

Which brings us back to Venables.

The former Barcelona, Tottenham and England supremo took up the Socceroos' coaching position in 1996 as a personal challenge.

His brief was quite straightforward: to get Australia to the World Cup.

Helped in no small measure by a favourable draw, Venables took up the challenge to give the Australians a second taste of World Cup football. His effort will be judged on this count and this count only.

El Tel told me a few months ago a coach's job is to improve a team and if one does that one can be satisfied with one's work.

Well, there is no doubt that Australia – their 11-game unbeaten record under Venables apart – are playing much better and more entertaining football than that provided by his immediate predecessors.

But that will mean absolutely nothing if we fail to reach France. And Venables knows it.

Captain Alex Tobin says Venables has done wonders for the morale of the Socceroos in his short stint down under.

"He is a down to earth person who has the ability to relate very well with his players

because he was a top player himself," Tobin said.

"He is also a supremely confident coach who makes us feel he knows exactly what needs to be done to get results."

This is the scenario surrounding the Socceroos' preparation for an epic confrontation that could well determine the future of the game in Australia.

One hopes that the pressures of home expectation that have floored many a great team won't stop our players from performing to the best of their ability.

One also hopes that when the Socceroos run on to the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 29 November, they will have the support of not only the soccer fraternity but the whole nation.

THE RECORD - VENABLES' FIRST XI

January, Melbourne:	New Zealand	1-0	(Bingley)
January, Brisbane:	South Korea	2-1	(Bingley, Edwards)
January, Sydney:	Norway	1-0	(Hooker)
March, Skopje:	Macedonia	1-0	(Vidmar A)
April, Budapest:	Hungary	3-1	(Vidmar A 2, Muscat)
June, Sydney:	Solomon Islands	13-0	(Mori 5, Aloisi 5, Foster, Tapai, Bosnich pen.)
June, Sydney:	Tahiti	5-0	(Vidmar A, Trimboli 2, Arnold, Bingley)
June, Sydney:	Solomon Islands	6-2	(Slater, Arnold, own goal, Tapai 2, Vidmar A pen.)
June, Sydney:	Tahiti	2-0	(Zelic, Trimboli)
June, Auckland:	New Zealand	3-0	(Aloisi, Vidmar A, Foster)
July, Sydney:	New Zealand	2-0	(Zelic, Arnold)

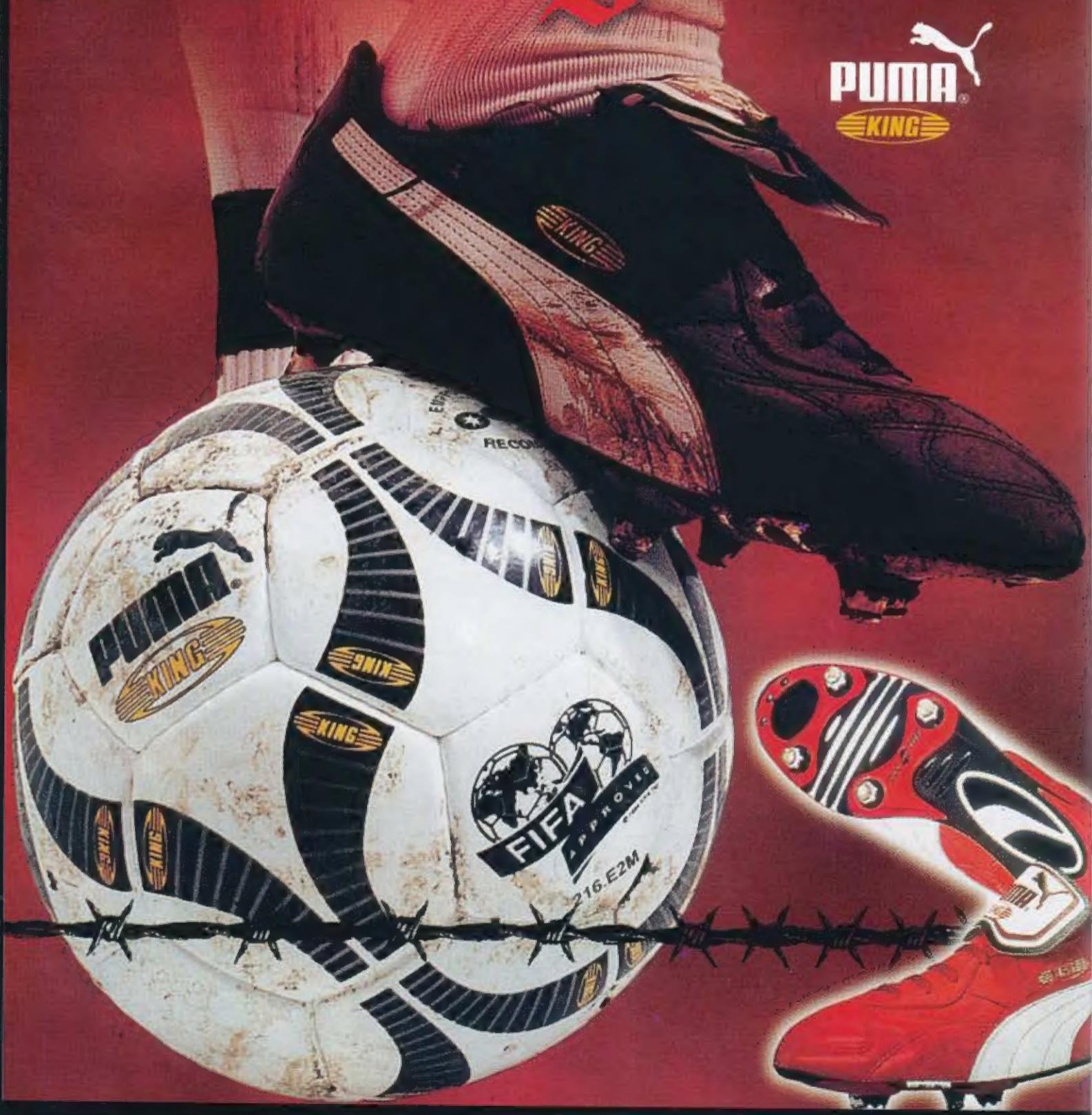
Played	W	D	L	For	Against
11	11	0	0	39	4

Scorers under Venables: Aloisi 6, Vidmar A 6, Mori 5, Arnold 3, Bingley 3, Tapai 3, Trimboli 3, Foster 2, Zelic 2, Bosnich 1, Edwards 1, Hooker 1, Muscat 1, Slater 1, own goal 1.

Kons for Tel

Soccer King

The Worlds
most famous boot



The Socceroos' greatest games

November 1973 - Hong Kong.
Australia 1 South Korea 0.

Surely the Socceroos' finest hour. The 1973 qualifiers saw Australia needing to defeat South Korea over two legs to qualify for the World Cup finals in West Germany. The Socceroos were held to a scoreless draw in Sydney, after which the Korean coach predicted a 2-0 victory for his team in the return encounter.

His prediction seemed spot on as the Asians sped to a two goal lead in Seoul, but goals by Branko Buljevic and Ray Baartz secured a battling 2-2 draw. The stage was set for a gripping play-off in Hong Kong.

Australia had the better of the third match but as the game passed the hour mark, neither team had troubled the scorers. After 70 minutes, however, came an unforgettable winning goal.

Ray Richards' freekick found Jimmy Rooney on the edge of the South Korean penalty area. Rooney slipped the ball to midfielder Jimmy Mackay, whose 30 metre piledriver left the goalkeeper clutching thin air.

Mackay's wonder goal was enough to seal a 1-0 victory and to send the Socceroos to their first and so far only World Cup finals appearance.

October 1985 - Tel Aviv.
Israel 1 Australia 2.

This victory in Tel Aviv is arguably the Socceroos' greatest ever away win. Playing an Israeli team widely regarded in their homeland as the best they'd ever produced, the Aussies battled a fiercely parochial 45,000 crowd. Injury difficulties and erratic refereeing in this bruising clash.

By half-time it was clear this was going to be a classic Aussie backs-to-the-wall scenario. The scoreline was blank after 45

compiled by PATRICK MANGAN

minutes, but Socceroo keeper Terry Greedy had been stretchered off with a head injury and coach Frank Aron had been banished from the touchline for obscene language.

Early in the second half striker David Mitchell intercepted a wayward pass from an Israeli defender and slotted it past the goalkeeper. Within minutes it was 2-0 as John Kosmina powerfully headed home a Graham Jennings cross and the game seemed as good as over.

Israel pulled a goal back, but replacement keeper Jeff Oliver ensured that the points were heading down under when his spectacular one-handed save kept Alan Davidson's misdirected backheader out of the net.

The bizarre 85th minute dismissal of tigerish midfielder Kenny Murphy for kicking the ball too vigorously out of play kept Australian fans on tenterhooks until the final whistle, but the Socceroos hung on for a courageous victory.

December 1985 - Melbourne.
Australia 0 Scotland 0.

The 1985 qualifiers saw Australia having to face Scotland after eliminating New Zealand, Israel and Taiwan, but if the highly-rated Scots were expecting an easy passage to the 1986 Mexico World Cup finals, it quickly became apparent they were in for a surprise from the part-timers.

Socceroo coach Frank Aron told the Scottish media before the first leg at Glasgow's Hampden Park, "We are not a bunch of cuddly koalas", and some crunching tackles from Australia's defenders early in the game emphasised the point.

The Aussies rarely ventured into Scotland's half in a gritty defensive

display, but after holding out until half-time they were disappointed to go down 2-0 to second half strikes from Davie Cooper and debutant Frank McAvinnie.

The return leg was held at Olympic Park in Melbourne, and the Scots were sufficiently comfortable with the two goal cushion that they rested Kenny Dalglish and Gordon Strachan for the game.

To the surprise of many of the millions watching the game around the world, Australia had the better of the first half and only a reflex save by Scotland keeper Jim Leighton by striker John Kosmina kept the scoreline blank at the break.

But it was in the second half that the Socceroos really put the pressure on their European opponents and in the last 20 minutes Australia could easily have scored three times.

Twice in a minute Zarko Odzakov went within millimetres of putting the Aussies ahead, as first an inspired Leighton fingertipped an Odzakov freekick over the bar and then the luckless midfielder shimmied past the Scottish defence only to see his shot bounce agonisingly past the far post when it seemed more likely to come to rest in the back of the net.

There was still time for young substitute Frank Farina to come close to breaking the deadlock, but by then it was obvious it wasn't to be the Socceroos' night, in spite of the territorial advantage the part-timers held over their illustrious opponents for most of the game.

Kenny Dalglish, giving expert comments for Scottish television, claimed after the match that a draw had been a fair result. Try telling that to the Aussies who, with a bit of luck, could have been jetting off to Mexico the following June instead of an extremely relieved Scottish squad.

August 1993 - Sydney.
Australia 2 Canada 1.

The early games of the 1993 World Cup qualifiers saw the Socceroos ease past New Zealand, their 'dream team', predominantly made up of European-based players cruising to a 4-0 aggregate victory.

Canada was expected to provide a sterner test for the Aussies, and so it proved. The Canucks took a slender 2-1 advantage with them to Sydney, a win secured after Socceroo keeper Robert Zubira was sent off in the first half.

Australian coach Eddie Thomson said he would 'bet his house' on his charges overcoming the deficit in the second leg, and the Socceroos played as if they had no intention of leaving Thommo homeless.

Australia's first half performance was electrifying and it was a miracle that the Canadians trailed only by a solitary Frank Farina strike. The Socceroos had almost a dozen clear strikes at goal in the opening stanza, with Farina and Aurelio Vidmar coming close two or three times apiece.

Early in the second half disaster struck as second string keeper Mark Schwarzer let a shot from Canada's Hooper slip through his fingers to level the score at 1-1.

Australia continued to pepper the opposition goal, but they were 12 minutes away from World Cup elimination when Mehmet Durakovic, the human brick wall materialised from nowhere to arc a 15-metre header over Canadian goalie Craig Forrest.

The match went to extra-time and once again the Aussies had the better of proceedings, but in spite of Durakovic and Tony Vidmar coming close, the score remained at 2-2, forcing the tie to penalties.

Enter Schwarzer, only playing because Robert Zubira was suspended and Mark Bosnich was in dispute with the Australian authorities. The Marrom custodian saved twice in the shootout, and Farina slammed home his team's fourth and decisive penalty to send the Socceroos into the next round of the World Cup.

WORLD CUP WONDERS

The Socceroos' greatest games

October 1993 - Sydney.
Australia 1 Argentina 1.

The Socceroos' reward for disposing of the Canadians was a 'mission impossible' against dual world champions Argentina. Diego Maradona returned to the



Argentinian lineup after a lengthy drugs ban, indicating how seriously the South Americans were taking the tie.

The Argentinians, shell-shocked after a 5-0 home defeat by Colombia had forced them into the play-off

Batistuta, Abel Balbo, Fernando Redondo and Maradona himself conceded possession to the Aussies for large periods of the first half.

In the opening 30 minutes, it was Australia that went closer to scoring. Graham Arnold almost connected at the near post with a Jason van Blerk cross and then Robbie Slater charged through the midfield but his final shot lacked the power to trouble the Argentine goalkeeper, Sergio Goycochea.

Eight minutes before the break, disaster struck. Maradona, who'd been well shackled by Socceroo skipper Paul Wade, dispossessed the usually-impenetrable Milan Ivancovic and fired over an otherwise perfect cross which Balbo despatched past Mark Bosnich with a brilliant header.

The Australians were undaunted at falling a goal behind on home soil, however, and within four minutes Ned Zelic replicated the mastery of Maradona by threading a pass to Tony Vidmar deep inside Argentina's penalty area. Vidmar squared the ball to his brother Aurelio who slipped it past Goycochea.

In the second term the Socceroos continued to hold their own against the 1986 world champions. Batistuta had three good opportunities to break the deadlock but Aurelio Vidmar and van Blerk also had their chances. The game finished 1-1.

The 42,000 crowd was disappointed the home team couldn't secure the win they needed to put pressure on Argentina for the return leg in Buenos Aires, but those fans reflecting on having seen an Australian team match one of the world's great footballing nations over the full 90 minutes knew



against Australia, were nervous about facing the Socceroos.

In front of a packed Subiaco

AND THE MOST FORGETTABLE...

April 1989 - Auckland.
New Zealand 2 Australia 0.

This game, perhaps more than any other, defines the 'forgettable' syndrome the Aussies seem to have had since the 1986 World Cup final against Spain.

Having apparently done the hard work in defeating New Zealand and the Soviets and heading into the final in Auckland, Australia could afford to let its guard down. It did, though, with a victory against the All Whites.

New Zealand scored with 10 men after dislodging Tony Bosnich from the goal-line, defeating Australia 2-0. They scheduled the game as a curtain raiser for a concert featuring Elton John in the post-match after-party.

The Socceroos had collected power to beat Chile 2-1. New Zealand's coach expected an easy win in the 40th minute when Michael Bradford pounced on a header from a free-kick.

The Socceroos had collected an extra point and were leading 2-1. They continued to dominate the game, but were beaten from the All Whites' penalty spot late in the game, ending with a brilliant 2-0 win - a blip in a brilliant 20-month campaign that gave Australia its first World Cup qualification.

Australia lost the game, leaving them with the distinct prospect of having to beat Israel in their final group match in order to progress to the next round. The Socceroos ended the day 1-1 with the Israelis and were eliminated, but there is one bright note: it was the second consecutive New Zealand match that had been decided by a blow.

Surely Australia's odd one-on-one against Yannick Peirson in Auckland last year has to be the worst performance I have seen

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Asians

South Korea

Population: 49 million
Area: 100,210 sq km
Capital: Seoul
Languages: Korean
Religion: Buddhist, Confucian
Major cities: Seoul (100 000)
Other: Major football tournaments: 1986, 1990 and 1994 World Cup
Football Federation: KFA

RAUL BLANCO: The South Korean national team has been around since 1953, but has only really come into its own in the last few years. They have qualified for the 1994 World Cup and are currently ranked 11th in the world.

Australia's assistant coach RAUL BLANCO believes the Socceroos' final opponents in their campaign to reach France 98 will come from Iran, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, China or Japan.



Blanco, who has seen plenty of Asian football in a coaching career spanning more than a decade, has no doubts that the team to face Australia in a final, two-leg playoff on November 22 and 29 will come from this quintet.

Here are Blanco's views on each of the remaining 10 Asian countries who are currently involved in a mad scramble for a place in the French finals.

- compiled by PHILIP MICALLEF

Japan

Population: 125 million
Area: 377,813 sq km
Capital: Tokyo
Languages: Japanese
Religion: Shinto, Buddhist
Major cities: Tokyo (100 000)
Other: Major football tournaments: 1994 World Cup
Football Federation: JFA

RAUL BLANCO: The Japanese national team has been around since 1953, but has only really come into its own in the last few years. They have qualified for the 1994 World Cup and are currently ranked 11th in the world.

China

Population: 1.2 billion
Area: 9,596,960 sq km
Capital: Beijing
Languages: Chinese
Religion: Taoist, Buddhist
Major cities: Beijing (100 000)
Other: Major football tournaments: 1994 World Cup
Football Federation: CFFA

RAUL BLANCO: The Chinese national team has been around since 1953, but has only really come into its own in the last few years. They have qualified for the 1994 World Cup and are currently ranked 11th in the world.

Australia

Population: 19 million
Area: 7,685,095 sq km
Capital: Canberra
Languages: English, Aboriginal
Religion: Christian
Major cities: Sydney (100 000)
Other: Major football tournaments: 1994 World Cup
Football Federation: FFA

AUSTRALIA'S LEADING SOCCER MAGAZINE
SOC
Soccer

The Commish

In the second of his interviews for Soccer Australia magazine, GREG BLAKE tackles the man behind the moustache behind the future of Australian soccer, George Negus.

And so it became legend that the six-gun slingin' 'Balmain Cowboy' came a pokin' his big ol' bushy moustache into soccer's badlands. Remember: 'Tick - tick - tick, I'm George Negus, I'm Ian Leslie and I'm Ray Martin?'

Yes, Negus, the journo who virtually single-handedly defined tabloid television in Australia on the original Oz version of '60 Minutes', is a Soccer Australia commissioner.

These days Negus likes to use big words like 'obsequious' and 'labyrinth' as host of high-brow ABC-TV current affairs event 'Foreign Correspondent'. He also likes stirring the pot as a high profile soccer administrator. Recently he deined to talk down to me.

GB - Hello George, still available for that interview?

GN - Can you call me back in 10 minutes?

GB - Sure.

Ten minutes later...

GB - George?

GN - G'day mate, how are you?

GB - Good. Were you watching Stuart Littlemore (host of ABC's Media Watch)?

GN - (Sheepishly) I was.

GB - Why, just because your name was mentioned again?

GN - Isn't it always? I just watch to see what the next serve's going to be.

GB - Now, I understand that you are a high-brow ABC journalist of some integrity these days, but hopefully you'll

forgive me if I'm a little flippant and rude. A little bit intrusive, a little '60 Minutes'-ish if you like...

GN - No, I'm expecting it.

GB - And don't be scared, just because you haven't got an auto-cue to help you through.

GN - I'll try and string at least a few words together

GB - Just do your best. OK, well the most topical question for me is, given that I've hounded you for the past 18 months about it, please go on the public record and tell me why I can't be a bloody foreign correspondent too. What do you find so offensive about my style?

"The facts of life are that for 20 years soccer in Australia was in the doldrums. It is no longer in the doldrums."

GN - (Chortling) Well, to be honest I think you'd stand a fair chance. Anyone that can cop my style can cop just about anyone's style. I think you've been hardly done by.

GB - Yes, cold comfort until I get a contract in the mail. Anyway, tell me about the 'Balmain Cowboy' nickname.

GN - Well, Blakie, I used to be the 'Balmain Cowboy'. How far behind the times are you?

GB - Next you'll be telling me Malcolm Fraser is no longer Prime Minister! But how did the nickname come about?

GN - In the old '60 Minutes' days I

used to get about in jeans and cowboy boots and people thought it was a look b it was really because I shopped at a loca disposal store.

GB - On '60 Minutes', you and that program really defined tabloid television Australia...

GN - No, it was broadsheet televisi packed into a narrow band.

GB - Hmmmm. Anyway, high-brows and intellectuals like myself watch 'Foreign Correspondent', but because you use lots of big words on the show I would think that would tend to turn away the likes of Joe Punch-clock and Harriet Housecoat. Why go back to the ABC, and are we now seeing the quintessential you?

GN - I got tired of talking to 11-yea olds on commercial television.

GB - Ah, so you admit it was tabloid TV?

GN - No, I don't think I've changed my approach much at all. Maybe the odd three syllable word, but other than that it pretty much the same. But, if 'Foreign Correspondent' didn't exist I think I woul have invented it. It's a program made for someone like myself.

GB - So is this it career wise?

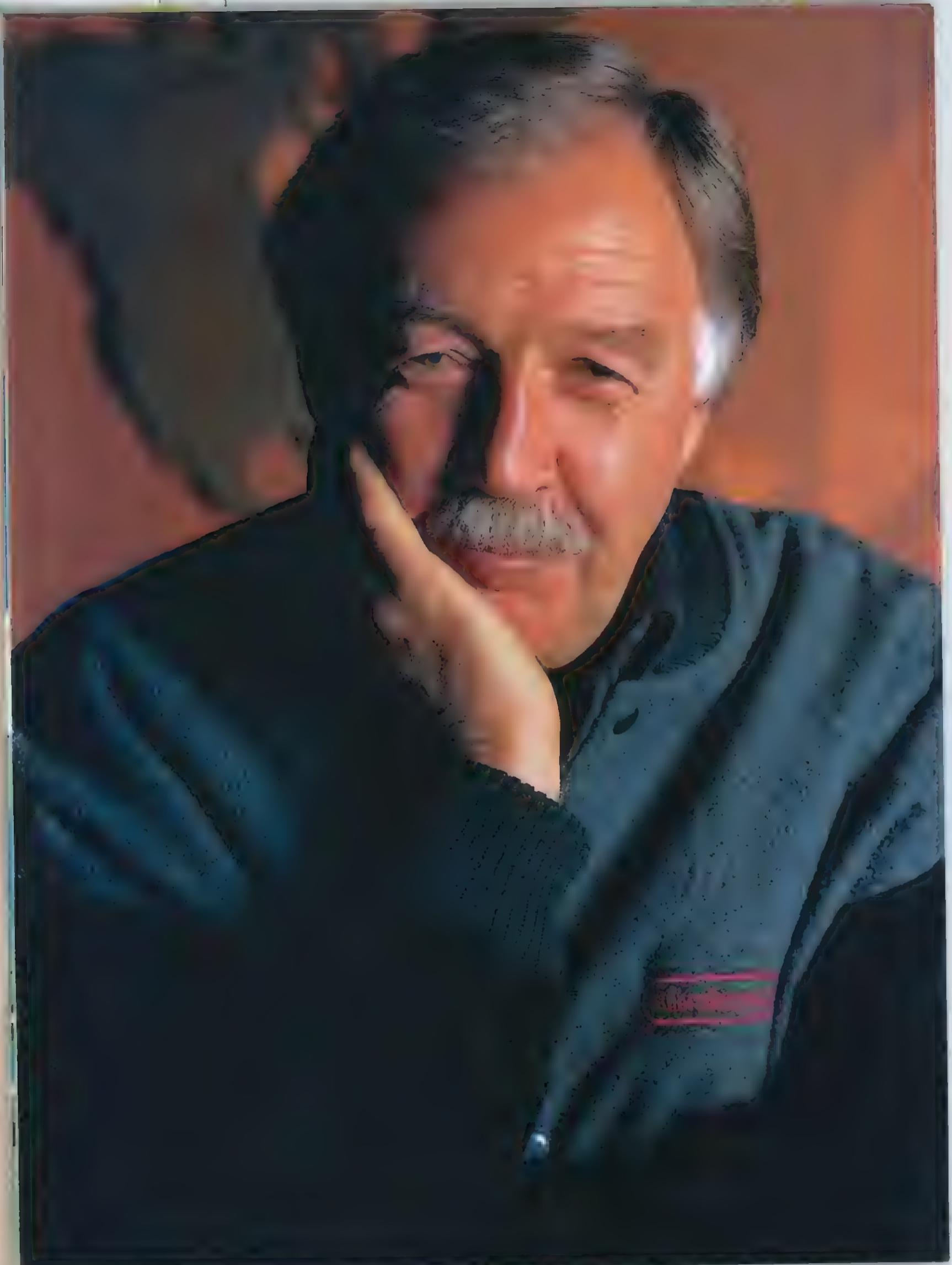
GN - What are you suggesting Blakie that I'm too old?

GB - Quite frankly, yes. Journalism a young man's game. But really, where does it go from here?

GN - Soccer, of course. My other unpaid life.

GB - That's a good link, George, because that's what we want to delve int at some point. So, how did the 'Balmain Cowboy' mosey on into soccer?

GN - Well, I was into soccer long before I was the 'Balmain Cowboy'. I grew up with soccer, it was my game as a kid -





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and cricket - and I had a little bit of rep success as a youngster. I grew to love the game and I've never lost that passion for it.

When my own kids started playing it rekindled my own fervour for soccer and I began to see things that I thought were not quite right and I saw a game that was outstripping its administration, so I put my hand up.

GB - Did anyone in particular push you to get involved at this level?

GN - When I started bagging the previous administration a few people came out of the woodwork and I got lots of strange phone calls in the middle of the night from people with exotic accents suggesting it might be a good idea if I did get involved and I began to take that idea seriously.

I began to think that maybe a profile like mine, contacts like mine and experience like mine could be useful to the game. So, given that I'm just a little too old and out of training for the Socceroos in 1998 (although that appears to be no barrier to Milan Ivanovic) I decided I'd go for an off-field role.

Although, Blakie, I'd have to say that last week when Milan Ivanovic was in Coffs Harbour as a guest for our local team against the Olyroos he said that my first touch was excellent - with both feet - and I took that as an offer to play for Adelaide City next season.

GB - It sounds to me as if you were both smoking the peace pipe behind the dressing sheds, but that's your business. Having said all that, was it a bad decision to get involved in soccer at this level, given that you have expressed some frustrations in recent times?

GN - No. I mean there have been some frustrating, annoying and idiotic moments, but in the long run, no. I'm delighted at the progress that the game has made since the new broom came in. It's been painful and difficult on occasions - and frustrating - but the game is in better shape than it ever was despite some

perpetual knockers.

The crowds are up, the profile is up, the money is down, but that was always going to be the case if we were going to progress, and now the boys at senior level look like they're as good a chance as they've ever been to mix it with the best in the world. What I would love to see is the yawning gap between our power base - our hundreds of thousands of young players - and the Ericsson Cup narrowed dramatically.

GB - Don't get too long-winded.

GN - I'm being serious now, Blakie.

GB - Yes, I do so enjoy a sobering moment. How about this then, on behalf of all of us who are wondering what such a high-profile megastar such as yourself is doing involved in our game. What the hell do you do? What is your point?

GN - Well, basically to cause internal trouble within the administration and the board of Soccer Australia. Ask David Hill (I will!), who doesn't know if I'm an ally or an enemy.

GB - In other words you are merely a more intellectual replacement for just about every soccer administrator gone before?

GN - I'm a professional ideas person, that is what journalism of my kind is about. I delight in ideas and have been hurling ideas of all kinds in all areas of the game, on field and off field.

Some of the ideas people have listened to and been put into practise. Some ideas have been ignored and some I've been told are ridiculous. But I'm going to keep throwing big ideas at the game so that people can get rid of their inferiority complex as far as the game is concerned.

GB - Why should I believe in you and this administration any more than in any previous well-intentioned but failed administrators?

GN - I don't ask you to, just look at results. People now are saying to me all the time that it is good to see soccer getting off its arse, because they did feel

that for so long it was a closed shop, an enclave, it was under a rock, and now people don't believe that any more.

We've done nowhere near as much for soccer as people think, but that is a good perception to have around the place. It's good that people are thinking that soccer is on the move.

People don't have to believe me any more than anyone else, but the facts of life are that for 20 years soccer in Australia was in the doldrums. It is no longer in the doldrums.

We are getting somewhere, despite the mistakes, despite set backs, despite the arguments and despite the divisions the game's profile on and off the field is higher than it has been for 20 years.



Now that's called progress by anybody's standards.

GB - So you and Hill aren't just a couple of high-profile old show-ponies who've got nothing better to do with their time than tamper in areas which they know nothing about?

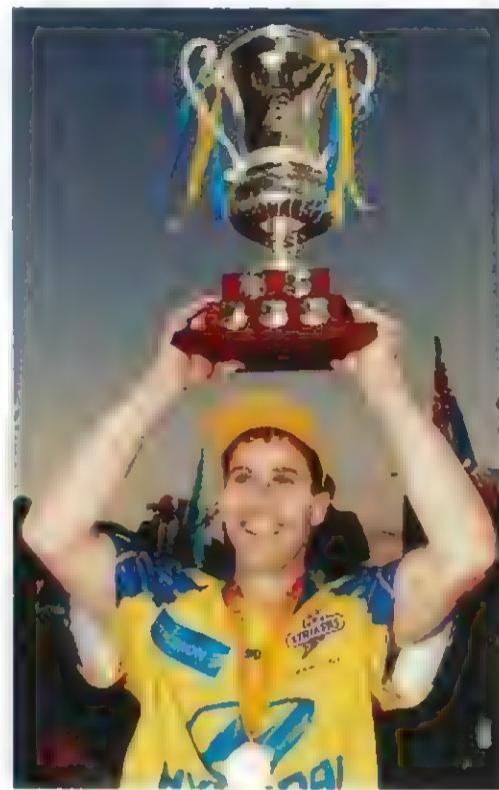
GN - I certainly don't need the publicity, Blakie.

GB - Oh, come on, who watches 'Foreign Correspondent'?

GN - I'd like to spend a lot more time with my family and they share my love of the game. My two boys play and my partner, who grew up an Aussie rules person, is now the secretary of our local club and is now driving people mad locally.

She's become a real enthusiast; she loves soccer and soccer people. She cannot get over the gentlemen she meets among soccer players. She used to think all football players were yobbos; that to be a

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footballer you had to have an IQ of no more than six. She keeps meeting soccer players who can string words together and who are interesting people.

GB - So what you are saying is that soccer people would watch 'Foreign Correspondent' and footballers from other codes would watch '60 Minutes'?

GN - I hadn't thought of it that way, but yeah.

GB - Like coaches, administrators tend to have a limited lifespan in this game. In your case have the frustrations led you down the track towards getting bumpy and quitting the game?

GN - I've only thought of leaving every other day. It's not fun. The frustration within the administration is not fun.

GB - Are you prepared to point fingers and name names?

GN - It's not any particular person.

it's just people generally when they don't share the vision. But I acknowledge the fact that if you're a big picture person then there are going to be occasions when people who have a job to do on the ground aren't necessarily going to see the big picture as you do. That's the frustration.

If anyone's got the idea that I'm just Hill's boy they can forget that. He argues with me more than any other person in the organisation and sometimes it gets extremely willing. You don't need the bullshit that goes with it. In fact I hesitated about re-joining the board.

Your point about people coming in and out of the game is very interesting because I don't really believe it's a good thing for people to stay too long in this sort of role. If I walked away it wouldn't be because I'd wimped it, it would be because I've outlived my usefulness and I'd thought a couple of times over the last few months that I had

The sniping from certain sections of the media and certain sections within the game. I thought 'this is bullshit' and I don't need this. You put your hand up to volunteer and bastards have a go.

You have to snap yourself out of that sort of self-indulgence and say that if you still believe in the vision you've got and you still believe in the role you can play you get back in there and kick up a bit more shit.

GB - Here's a final one to truly test your allegiances. In light of your recent television-funded junket for the Hong Kong handover, as the gung-ho journalist that you are, would you rather an exclusive interview with Pol Pot, a one-on-one with Mubutu Sese Seko or to take 'Foreign Correspondent' on the road to France during the World Cup finals next year?

GN - I don't think that's even a question, is it?

GB - Don't be a wimp, answer it.

GN - I'd go to France

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The young gu

The 1990s has seen the arrival of the first generation of Australian-born coaches in the national league.

IAN HAMILTON explores the ongoing impact the young guns are likely to have on soccer in this country.

There is a revolution in Australian soccer. Since 1995, the coaching fraternity in the Ericsson Cup has been given a facelift.

The old guard who have dominated



coaching since the advent of the national league, who almost to a man learned the game overseas, have been all but swept aside.

In the 1997/98 season Frank Arok stands alone as the last bastion of that group with 11 of the 14 Ericsson Cup coaches having emerged in recent years, some with very little coaching experience. Gone are Rale Rasic, Raul Blanco, Les Scheinflug, Manfred Schaefer, Eddie Thomson, Bruce Stowell - some up,

some out

Once, to get a job in the national league the major prerequisite was already having a job in the national league. Former Socceroo captain and Newcastle Breakers coach John Kosmina is not the only one to describe it as a "merry go round". "They kept getting in where they shouldn't have. All it was was a reshuffling of deckchairs on the Titanic - the game wasn't really going anywhere," says Kosmina.

But now it's all changed. In a progression that goes hand in hand with the growing maturity of the game in Australia, a new generation of homegrown coaches have broken through the glass ceiling. And they are a big part of the success equation of the game of recent years.

The most compelling testimony to the

revolution that is taking place comes from a look at last season's final six.

Five of the six coaches involved were young bloods - only Manfred Schaefer at Marconi managed to keep the Ericsson Cup dream alive for the old guard, although even he was on borrowed time, his replacement appointed long before Marconi was a spent force.

While Berti Mariani broke the cycle in 1988 at Marconi, even his unexpected success failed to fire the imaginations of club administrators elsewhere.

"I inherited the position by default, it was a big risk for the club," Mariani says. "A number of coaches were just rotating positions at the time - it was a fairly insular situation."

David Ratcliffe at Wollongong and Branko Culina at the Melbourne Knights made it in the early 90s, but it wasn't until 1996 that the revolution really began.

Theodorakopoulos says the revolution began with his appointment to the Wolves in 1996.

"Wollongong were the pioneers in employing the younger coach. They went for me as an unknown - that broke the cycle. Then we saw Angie Postecoglou given a chance at South Melbourne."

Postecoglou sees it similarly: "There was definitely a merry go round going on. But a couple of years ago people like David Ratcliffe, Branko Culina and John Kosmina broke through and the fact that they had some sort of success probably encouraged other clubs to go that way."

In 1995/96 former Socceroo skipper John Kosmina slotted in at Newcastle, Ian Dobson took over from Mirko Bazic at the Knights and took the title, and no one needs reminding what Frank Farina achieved in 96/97 in his first season as coach.

Also last year, Gary Maroc Adrian Santrac at West Adela Nyskohus at Adelaide City joine vanguard of generational chang

Adding a more exciting dim scene is the return of the prod where it all began.

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So why did all this take so l Club administration is now r professional, says Kosmina.

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Theodorakopoulos finished p Apia in 1991, after three broker

guns

Also last year, Gary Marocchi in Perth, Adrian Santrac at West Adelaide, and John Nyskohus at Adelaide City joined the vanguard of generational change.

Adding a more exciting dimension to the scene is the return of the prodigal sons to where it all began.

This season Eddie Krnceanic and David Mitchell join Frank Farina as the local game reaps its "European dividend" with the first wave of Australian exports bringing back the experience gleaned from careers spent at the highest levels the world game can offer. The local game produced them and now it's time to collect on the investment.

"It's so pleasing to see these coaches coming back and wanting to contribute to the national league," says Mariani.

"If you look at the overall progression of any soccer nation, that's what's needed if we are to progress."

"Some of these guys have amazing credentials, they're involved in the club, had full international experience and they're enthusiastic. A lot of them have gone back to their old clubs which is also crucial."

So why did all this take so long?

Club administration is now more professional, says Kosmina.

"It has to be, otherwise it won't survive. The old days when you could play favourites are all over and done with."

The biggest barrier has been administrators who want to be coaches, says Theodorakopoulos.

"Personal differences become too important," he says, quick to add there is "absolutely no intervention" at Wollongong.

"Clubs are gamblers a lot more, taking minor risks with inexperienced coaches but it seems to be paying off."

Theodorakopoulos finished playing with Anta in 1991 after three broken legs with

Sydney Olympic, began coaching NSW state league third division side Alexandria, before moving on to Leichhardt Tigers as under-21 coach and assistant to Manfred Schaefer.

Then, a championship with Belmore Hercules in division one in 1995 was quickly followed in January 1996 by the call from Wollongong, the Wolves being unhappy with Bert Mariani.

Ange's story is similar, retiring as a player in 1993 at 27 with a knee injury, and after being assistant coach to Frank Arok in 1995, he took over in 1996 towards season's end.

Postecoglou had little in the way of formal coaching qualifications or experience. But what he did have was invaluable.

"I had to give the game away early, and I had assumed the captaincy at a young age, 22, and have always been in leadership roles at the club, involved with coaches and exposed to their thought processes." Most of all he was South Melbourne through and through.

"It was a huge punt by the club to gamble on a 30-year-old with no experience, especially at a club like this."

Gary Marocchi finished playing in 1988 at Adelaide City, coaching Perth Italia under-18s in 1989 and 1990 winning both



championships. He did the same as coach from 1991-93, then took the F Kangaroos through undefeated in the Singapore league in 1994.

It was a natural progression that should coach Perth's first national team.

"The fact that I was in the nation and got more publicity made it easier maybe get a bigger job sooner. I think certainly helps if you've played at a level," Marocchi says.

"I have been able to mould together a bunch of players that no-one seemed to think were any good. I'm a tough son coach."

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Branko Culina

Marocchi is among the few to have a Level 3 coaching certificate, the highest in Australia. But communication and leadership skills are more valuable in today's game.

"Those are things you can't teach - you've either got them or you haven't. When it comes to national league sides you need to have a lot more skills in management than you would have at a lower level."

For Kosmina, never shy to call a spade a spade, finding someone to give him a top-level coaching opportunity was hard for different reasons.

"I didn't have the healthiest of reputations. I certainly put a few noses out of joint as a player and when I was involved with the media," he concedes.

Adrian Santrac



Two seasons at the Warringah Dolphins in the NSW Super League brought quick success, the team third in 1994 before taking out the minor premiership and grand final in 1995 - yet he was appointed by Newcastle before claiming either

trophy.

Like his playing days, Branko Culina has arrived at the top quickly as a coach.

Sacrificing a management career in the publishing industry, he stepped up into the national league as coach of the Melbourne Knights in 1992.

The first of this decade's new breed, he personifies the modern coach - much more of a thinker than his predecessors.

"There was no guidance then, it was just go out there and do it. Coaches are far, far better today in that way," says Culina.

"As a coach you've got to be a politician, a listener, a teacher, a doctor - all of these things, and not just to the players."

The future of Australian soccer, under the guidance of young coaches like Culina, is in good hands.



John Kosmina

Coaches tell on Tel

As you might expect, all of the current crop harbour national coaching ambitions down the track. Surely it must only be a matter of time before generational change takes place at national team level.

With the guys having such success at domestic level, it's hard to argue against their progression to the next stage before too long.

And with Socceroo, Olyroo, Youth and Joey responsibilities all becoming more demanding, there are potentially four national positions up for grabs, either as assistants or in outright charge.

"And it's important they be given the motivation for the national team because ultimately one of these will eventually be a coach of the national team," Marocchi says.

Venables won't be a long term proposition and the new generation are almost as one in calling for the groundwork to be laid now for the post-Tel era.

Gary Marocchi: "It has certainly been proven a good decision but I would hope the local coaches get involved and I think the time has come to get a new breed of coaches working under Terry so we can follow all his good work through."

"We've got four (national) sides. The ideal thing would be to have four coaches. If the funding was there."

Kosmina: "I think it was a fantastic appointment - a masterstroke - the profile of the game has improved out of sight."

"Soccer Australia has an obligation to use all the resources available. And as much as Venables is the national team coach, he's also an invaluable resource for the game in this country."

"They've got to put a program in place - I want to go out and watch him train and ask him questions. I want to be able to pick his brains."

"We don't generally get access to guys of his ilk. While he's here we've got to get as much out of him as we can. I said the same thing when Eddie Thomson was coach as well - he went to the Olympics in Barcelona and Atlanta and, no fault of Thommo's, we saw not one piece of information out of those tournaments."

Nick Theodorakopoulos: "Initially I thought Zoran Matic was the right man for the job, but Venables has been a masterstroke. He has such an aura and every word he says carries great meaning with his players."

"But young coaches who aspire to lead this country at senior level should be given a chance. I think we should be grooming people like Branko Culina, like Frank Farina, with a big passion for the game and who are basically winners."



The

Former Socceroo forward David Mitchell is back in Australia as coach of the controversial Sydney United club. He believes he's up to the task, as ROBERT WHEATLEY explains.

Nasty in the air, elbows prominent, very quick in full flight.

A goalscorer. This was our (NSW under-19's) team's assessment of the South Australian attacker at the national titles in Canberra 17 years ago.

As an overlapping fullback I had two assignments on the eve of the 1980 NSW-SA final. One was containment - specifically, trying to stop David Mitchell. The other was to provide crosses in attack that had fuelled NSW's progress to the brink of another Championship. After 90 minutes NSW narrowly won the contest. Mitchell had been a major headache.

That nuisance value eventually blossomed into an incomparable international career. More clubs than Jack Nicklaus! Well, in Mitchell's case, the cliche clearly rings true. Fifteen years of globetrotting amongst some of the world's leading clubs including Glasgow Rangers, Chelsea and Feyenoord have ironically led to one of Mitchell's toughest adjustments.

"The hardest thing has been to return and settle back in Australia after a successful career. I arrived from Scotland at the age of six but have never really lived here. There's been something like 11 moves in 12 years," Mitchell reflected.

The transition in football terms, however, has been softened by a continuing appetite for involvement. Eleven matches as caretaker manager with UTS Olympic at the tail end of the 1996/97 Ericsson Cup season developed into a role as head coach with Sydney United.

To Mitchell's disappointment, the appointment came with substantial unwanted baggage in the form of admission uncertainty into the 1997/98 competition, a deluge of player transfers and an unsure financial base and identity for the western Sydney outfit.

nom

Despite the enormous barriers the idealism is still burning bright. "My aim is to have the best team in Sydney, the best team in Australia and the best team in Asia."

Realistic goals? Time will tell. But stresses that the public will be surprised by the source of ideas. "In spite of my British playing background the style need not necessarily be British. That's definitely the case."

"We aim to play it properly with the ground. I want an attractive team with two to three different systems on the players. In my days at Swindon we played pure football with Hoddle's system."

By the time Mitchell combined forces with the current England manager in 1988 he had endured a decade of overseas challenges.

"I do regard myself as a pioneer. In the early days it was a laugh if you came to Australia. You were a non entity, not even in world soccer. Craig Johnston was the first Middlesbrough."

Mitchell also carried the self-inflicted weight of a contract that ensured his availability for the national side. It did not favour him. Leaving Feyenoord as leading goalscorer for matches in Australia's World Cup campaign, Mitchell returned to England and found himself on the outer.

The manager was not pleased. The bench was his punishment. Substitutes' bench was his punishment. Socceroo service. A kaleidoscope of followed.

By Mitchell's own admission, the Bridge experience was a disaster. Six Town signalled to him the depth of commitment in the English game and a return to goalscorer's charts for the revitalised forward.

Exit Mitchell for an eight month's experience in Izmir before a return to England in London with dockside Millwall. And still reeling in disbelief add Selangor and Hong Kong, Newcastle United on loan. The wheel turned full circle and saw

nomad returns

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The manager was not pleased. The substitutes' bench was his punishment for Socceroo service. A kaleidoscope of clubs followed.

By Mitchell's own admission, the Stamford Bridge experience was a disaster. Swindon Town signalled to him the depth of commitment in the English game and a return to the goalscorer's charts for the revitalised centre forward.

Exit Mitchell for an eight match Turkish experience in Izmir before a return to 'the Den' in London with dockside Millwall. And if you're still reeling in disbelief add Selangor, a stint in Hong Kong, Newcastle United on loan before the wheel turned full circle and saw Mitchell,

wife Adele and two daughters back in Sydney.

"I still feel I have a lot to offer as a player. With a good pre-season under my belt I could be a 90 minute proposition. At UTS (Olympic) I had to concentrate on the view from the outside and felt I sacrificed myself."

He defines his role this year as one totally dependent on the squad he can assemble.

"The loss of nine players makes it an even bigger task. Sydney United was the best team. I now have to stabilize the side, get a team together, to gel and blend them and aim for the top six."

The focus of his plans for the aspiring Mitchell is the players. "They must be happy and the club's number one asset.

"Unfortunately in Australian soccer half of the youth goes missing. The clubs are not strong enough to look after them. The biggest single problem is still the part-time nature of the season."

In contrast, Mitchell recalls life in the English first division

"Twenty four teams in the league meant speed and aggression. A physical battle. The amount of games, though, was a killer. There were too many clubs, too much tradition and there was no break."

"I do feel, however, that apart from the top two sides in Belgium and the top three to four units in Holland, the depth of football in the English first division meant those leading sides were of a higher standard than across the Channel."

Dutch football was technical and highly sensitive. But the smaller teams lack money and depth. There was also a chasm of difference in ability between top and bottom.

"The Bundesliga was like stepping into the future."

With such a diverse education in the game he remains astounded at the lack of interest from local soccer bodies in harnessing his knowledge.

"Soccer federations, clubs or even coaches have never asked to tap into my situation. I think it's an indictment on the game, a sad

thing that everyone is interested in only their own little job."

In an ironic twist for the well-connected Mitchell, his managerial future nearly ended up with what some would describe as the Socceroos' second home - Portsmouth Football Club - but he rejected it for an Australian opening.

If there is a lesson Mitchell has learned from a multitude of managers it stems from the fact that even the worst coaches can teach you something. You learn how not to do things.

So, David what about our current National boss? "No question, El Tel's appointment is a major boost to the code. His record speaks volumes and I rate him among the top five coaches in the world."

"And whether you love him or loathe him, he (David Hill) had the balls to get him. Venables has enormous value because he could walk into any boardroom in the world and be recognised."

Mitchell's personal record of four World Cup campaigns and understanding of the impact of success for the code in Australia's final two qualifying matches allows him to scoff at suggestions that Venables' contract is financially lopsided in his favour.

"Let's make it clear, nothing is too much to pay to secure a place in the World Cup finals."

His initiation to Ericsson Cup ranks mirrors former Socceroo teammate Eddie Krnecovic and follows the remarkable path of Frank Farina in his rookie year with the Strikers.

"As a player overseas I was not pushy and didn't chase publicity like some of our current overseas crop."

With Mitchell's new direction all that could change. And expect the 'big man' to come out fighting.



From Malaysian royalty to Melbourne Knight



Alan Davidson was a weekly reporter during his time in Malaysia.



Socceroo great Alan Davidson has left behind a life of luxury in Malaysia to kickstart his coaching career back home with Melbourne Knights. BERT VAN BEDAF spoke to the man regarded by many as the best player Australia has ever produced.

Alan "Davo" Davidson says his soccer career is in transition.

It is changing from being a legendary player to becoming a coach and he has chosen the Melbourne Knights to gradually close one chapter in order to open the other.

Davidson will line up as sweeper, while also fulfilling the task of assistant coach to Ken Worden. Davidson's goal is to coach a national league club, following fellow greats David Mitchell, Frank Farina and Eddie Krnceanic at Sydney United, Brisbane Strikers and Carlton, and ultimately to be in charge of the Socceroos.

"I'm moving into a transitional period from being a player to becoming a coach. There's no doubt I'll get involved in coaching and that I can do the job. It's my ambition to coach the Socceroos one day.

"I've got my (coaching and playing) credentials. But that's only part of the picture. I've still got to learn the administration side and Ken Worden can teach me a lot. To be a good coach you've got to have good football knowledge. You've got to be strong and have good motivational skills. You've got to be able to speak well and be a front man."

Davidson greatly admires Worden, his coach at the Knights in 1991 who, like Davidson, has returned to Somers St after a highly successful spell in Malaysia.

"Ken is the best coach I've ever worked with. There's no other coach I'd work under. I can learn so much from him. We have committed ourselves to staying together at the Knights for the next two years.

"We're full-time here. I'll also be

involved in youth development and the promotional side of things. But it's hard to predict where you'll be at the end of two years - soccer is such a volatile business."

After five years in Malaysia with Pahang, Davidson returned to where he left off. Two grand final losses in a row with the Knights, first against South Melbourne and then against Adelaide City, both on penalties and both at Olympic Park, left him emotionally scarred and frustrated.

"It (1992) was such a disappointing year. We'd just lost another grand final. I was so frustrated. We were minor premiers twice in 1991 and 1992, but we lost the grand finals against South Melbourne and Adelaide City, both on penalties at Olympic Park. It was a nightmare.

"After the 1992 grand final I went straight to Malaysia. The next day I flew out to Pahang on the east coast. It was an amazing experience. Pahang is the biggest state in Malaysia. It is a wealthy state and the royal family love their soccer. They are soccer mad.

"It was a different world mixing with these kinds of people and how they lived with wealth. Malaysia was good to me. Initially it was only for six months, but we liked it and we stayed for another five years.

"The lifestyle's very different to what we've got in Australia. We had servants looking after us. The first house we had had seven bedrooms and it was just too big. It was a mansion. We asked for a smaller one. So the crown prince bought me another house, just four bedrooms and servant quarters, at a resort."

Davidson said he left Malaysia on good terms with the crown prince, who gave him a rousing farewell at the palace. "He said the door will always be open whenever I wanted to come back and coach the team," Davidson said.

His fabulous years at Pahang, the property of a branch of the Malaysian royal family who "own" the state, have provided financial security for him and his family, wife Effie (whom he married in 1988) and sons Jason (6) and Jarrie (4 and born in Malaysia). But it was time to come back to

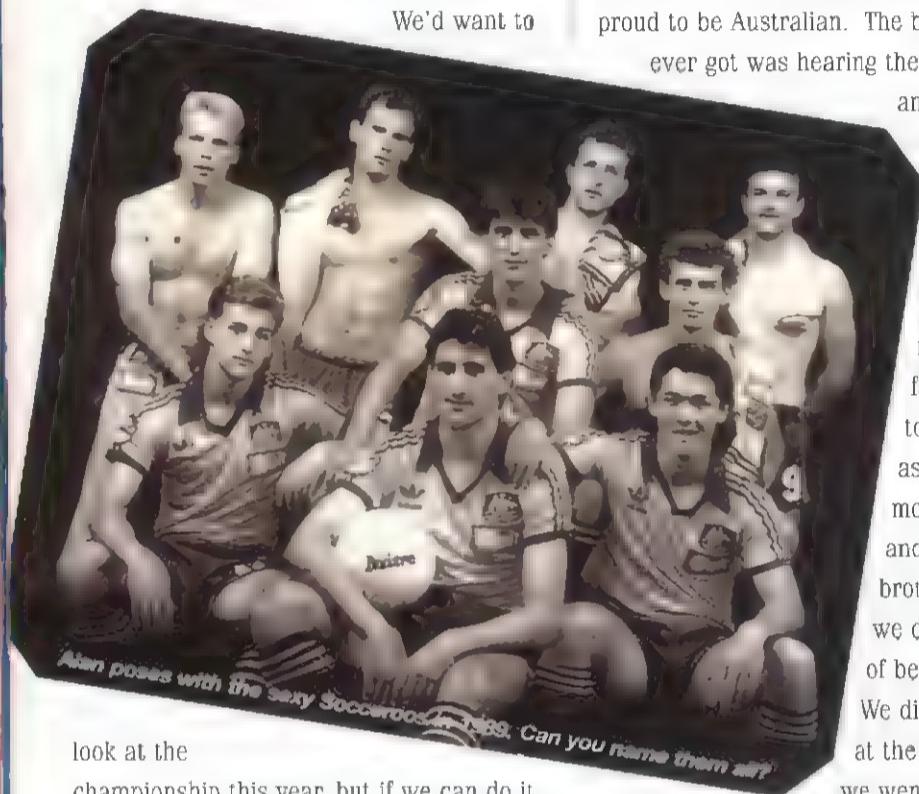
From Malaysian royalty to Melbourne knight

Australia, for the children's education and to share their growing up with their grandparents.

Davidson believes that Knights supporters should not expect miracles in 1997/98. Their youthful team has lost Joe Simunic (to Germany) and Lubo Lapsansky (to Carlton), although captain Andrew Marth has decided to stay. The club acquired 19-year-old wingback Zeljko Susa from Canberra. Most of last season's players, who finished sixth, have been retained.

"We've got to have some targets.

We'd want to



look at the championship this year, but if we can do it or not is another question. Once we've got a few games under our belt we'll have a better idea. We'd want to win the championship, but I don't think the supporters are expecting too much from us this year, because of the players we've lost.

"The most important thing is to get some experience in the team. That's why Ken wants me in the team - to inject some experience. We're trying to produce a quality team on a shoestring budget. We won't be able to compete with Carlton or South Melbourne financially - that's the

bottom line.

"I don't want to sound too negative. But at the same time I don't want to sound too positive either. We've got a positive attitude and we've got to get on with the job with what we've got. Only time will tell. One thing's for sure, we'll be organised and we'll have some discipline in the team."

Alan Davidson was born in Melbourne's western bayside suburb of Williamstown on 1 June, 1961. His father, Keith, was also born in Williamstown. Keith met his mother, Kazuko, in Japan.

"My father was part of the occupation forces and he met my mother in Japan after the war. I have two cultures. I am proud to be Australian. The biggest high I ever got was hearing the national

anthem when I played for Australia.

"But I'm also proud to be Japanese. My mother and my father had a lot to do with that as well. My mother told me and my (older) brother Ken that we could be proud of being Japanese. We didn't realise it at the time, but as we went through life

we began to appreciate what our parents had done."

Life for the Davidson boys wasn't easy in a time and a place when there weren't any Asian looking kids around, although there were plenty of Greek mates to muck around with.

"It felt like my brother and I were the only Asian kids in the western suburbs. Being Asian and born just after the second World War, we went through tough times.

"There was a lot of hatred. But we were mentally tougher, because we were

Early days for Alan at South Melbourne.



ridiculed.

Ken and I had to have a thicker skin. We stuck up for ourselves. It was good because it strengthened us. And being half Asian helped me in soccer. I stood out more

"People could see I was a bit different. There weren't too many Asian kids on the fields and they'd say 'This guy's not bad'. I remember coaches saying, 'There's a good little Asian guy down at Altona (City). You should watch him.'"

Soccer wasn't Davidson's immediate personal choice. He was captain of the local Australian rules football and cricket teams, but something else drew him to the round ball. "I chose soccer because all of my Greek mates played soccer and it went on from there. I discovered I loved the game.

"Once I got involved in soccer I thrived on it. Sometimes I would run around and knock on doors looking for kids to play. But no-one would play and I'd kick a ball on my own against a wall."

Davidson made his way rapidly through the ranks at Altona City before being picked up by South Melbourne, although he didn't exactly take a direct route.

"I went to Footscray JUST. They were renowned for looking after youth players. But they didn't want me. Then I went to Heidelberg Alexander and they said 'No'.

Then I went to South Melbourne and said 'OK, it costs us nothing, so we you'.

"I spent pre-season with them a two games I was a regular. You've take your opportunities. I wanted to the national league and when the opportunity came at South Melbourne took it and at the same time every else fell into place. After two months in the national team. Maybe it was maybe I made it happen. I don't know."

"I fitted in and things just took. By the same token I was always hungry to be the best and tried to achieve my targets and goals. All the boys would be at discos with their girlfriends, whereas I'd be staying at home and be in bed by 11 o'clock. I made sacrifices, but I accepted them. You don't get anything for nothing and I have no regrets."

Few players have suffered more serious injuries than Davidson. There have been several ankle fractures and knee operations, but a fractured back at Nottingham Forest was his worst, from which it took him more than a year to recover.

Anderson had just left Forest to Arsenal and Davidson took his place. Brian Clough, "Australia had just signed Nottingham Forest in 1984 in a transfer involving Juventus and Glasgow F.C. They spotted me from there. I went to England and played about 10 games for Forest. Then I broke my back. So put a knee into me."

"I had a three year contract, wanted to get home. I didn't like it. It was too cold. It was miserable. An Australian kid who had everything were alcoholics and unbelievable

"But I played in what was in the English first division and I knew I was good enough to play in it. It was I always wanted to do. I could have my whole life wondering whether I was good enough or not and now I know."

Then I went to South Melbourne and they said 'OK, it costs us nothing, so we'll take you'.

"I spent pre-season with them and after two games I was a regular. You've got to take your opportunities. I wanted to play in the national league and when the opportunity came at South Melbourne I took it and at the same time everything else fell into place. After two months I was in the national team. Maybe it was luck, maybe I made it happen. I don't know."

"I fitted in and things just took off. By the same token I was always hungry to be the best and tried to achieve my targets and goals. All the boys would be at discos with their girlfriends, whereas I'd be staying at home and be in bed by 11 o'clock. I made sacrifices, but I accepted them. You don't get anything for nothing and I have no regrets."

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Anderson had just left Forest for Arsenal and Davidson took his place under Brian Clough. "Australia had just played Nottingham Forest in 1984 in a tournament involving Juventus and Glasgow Rangers. They spotted me from there. I went to England and played about 10 games for Forest. Then I broke my back. Someone put a knee into me."

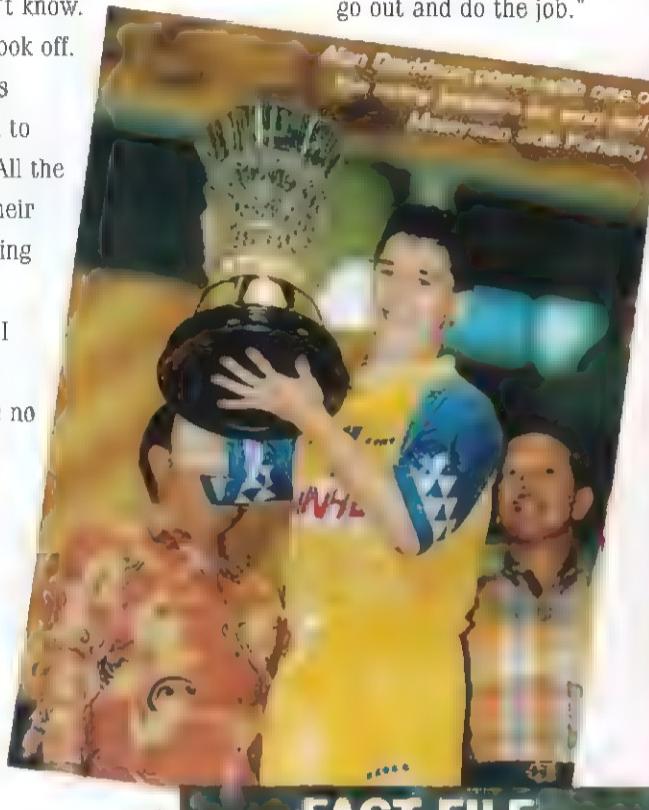
"I had a three year contract, but I just wanted to get home. I didn't like England. It was too cold. It was miserable. I was an Australian kid who had everything. They were alcoholics and unbelievable gamblers.

"But I played in what was in those days the English first division and I knew I was good enough to play in it. It was something I always wanted to do. I could have spent my whole life wondering whether I was good enough or not and now I know that I

was."

Happy to be back in Australia after an illustrious playing career both here and overseas, Davidson is confident of success as far as himself and the Knights are concerned.

"I don't drink. I don't smoke. I live a fairly healthy life and I'm pretty focused. As long I'm fit and strong, I can do it. If you look after yourself you can do anything. But at the end of the day, you've still got to go out and do the job."



FACT FILE

1977-79 Altona City, Victorian state league

1979-84 South Melbourne, national soccer league

1984-85 Nottingham Forest, English first division (now Premier League)

1987-92 Brief return at South Melbourne, joined Melbourne Knights

1992-97 Pahang. Won M-league and Cup

in 1992, M-league in 1995

1994-95 and 1995-96 Ericsson Cup seasons had stints with South Melbourne during Malaysian off-season

1997 - Briefly at Collingwood Warriors towards the end of the 1996/97 season, joined the Knights on a two-year contract until 1999. Played 330 national league games so far.

79 appearances for Australia between 1980 and 1991.

WHO IS

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Ericsson Cup

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CORPORATE GRAPHICS

Ericsson Cup

Round 1	Day
03/10/97	Fri
04/10/97	Sat
04/10/97	Sat
04/10/97	Sat
05/10/97	Sun
05/10/97	Sun

Round 2	Day
10/10/97	Fri
10/10/97	Fri
11/10/97	Sat
12/10/97	Sun
12/10/97	Sun
12/10/97	Sun

Round 3	Day
17/10/97	Fri
17/10/97	Fri
18/10/97	Sat
18/10/97	Sat
18/10/97	Sat
19/10/97	Sun
19/10/97	Sun

Round 4	Day
24/10/97	Fri
25/10/97	Sat
26/10/97	Sun

Round 5	Day
31/10/97	Fri
01/11/97	Sat
01/11/97	Sat
01/11/97	Sat
02/11/97	Sun
02/11/97	Sun
02/11/97	Sun

Round 6	Day
07/11/97	Fri
07/11/97	Fri
08/11/97	Sat
09/11/97	Sun
09/11/97	Sun
09/11/97	Sun

Round 7	Day
14/11/97	Fri
15/11/97	Sat
15/11/97	Sat
16/11/97	Sun
16/11/97	Sun
16/11/97	Sun

Round 8	Day
21/11/97	Fri
21/11/97	Fri
22/11/97	Sat
22/11/97	Sat
23/11/97	Sun
23/11/97	Sun
23/11/97	Sun

Round 9	Day
28/11/97	Fri
28/11/97	Fri
28/11/97	Fri
30/11/97	Sun
30/11/97	Sun
30/11/97	Sun

Round 10	Day
05/12/97	Fri
05/12/97	Fri
06/12/97	Sat
06/12/97	Sat
07/12/97	Sun
07/12/97	Sun
07/12/97	Sun

Round 11	Day
13/12/97	Sat
13/12/97	Sat
13/12/97	Sat
14/12/97	Sun
14/12/97	Sun
14/12/97	Sun

Round 12	Day
19/12/97	Fri
19/12/97	Fri
20/12/97	Sat
21/12/97	Sun
21/12/97	Sun
21/12/97	Sun

Round 13	Day
27/12/97	Sat
28/12/97	Sun

Ericsson Cup Fixture 1997/98

Please note: This draw is subject to alteration for television and Soccer Australia requirements.

Round 1

Date	Day	Home	Away	Venue	Kick-off
03/10/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	West Adelaide	Topper Stadium	07:30
04/10/97	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	Sydney United	Seiffert Oval	07:00
04/10/97	Sat	Carlton SC	Perth Glory	Optus Oval	03:00
04/10/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	South Melbourne	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
05/10/97	Sun	Melbourne Knights	Gippsland Falcons	Knights Stadium	06:00
05/10/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Marconi Fairfield	Bermore Spts Grd	06:30
05/10/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Wollongong City	tba	03:00

Round 2

10/10/97	Fri	Sydney United	Carlton SC	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
10/10/97	Fri	Wollongong City	Brisbane Strikers	Brandon Park	07:30
11/10/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	Canberra Cosmos	Marconi Stadium	07:00
12/10/97	Sun	South Melbourne	Melbourne Knights	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00
12/10/97	Sun	Perth Glory	Adelaide City	Perth Oval	04:00
12/10/97	Sun	Gippsland Falcons	Newcastle Breakers	Falcons Park	06:00
12/10/97	Sun	West Adelaide	UTS Olympic	tba	03:00

Round 3

17/10/97	Fri	Melbourne Knights	Wollongong City	Knights Stadium	06:00
17/10/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	South Melbourne	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
18/10/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	Perth Glory	Topper Stadium	07:30
18/10/97	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	Carlton SC	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
18/10/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	West Adelaide	Seiffert Oval	07:00
19/10/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Gippsland Falcons	Marconi Stadium	07:00
19/10/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Sydney United	Bermore Spts Grd	06:30

Round 4

24/10/97	Fri	Sydney United	Brisbane Strikers	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
25/10/97	Sat	Carlton SC	Adelaide City	Optus Oval	03:00
26/10/97	Sun	Perth Glory	Melbourne Knights	Perth Oval	04:00
26/10/97	Sun	Gippsland Falcons	Marconi Fairfield	Falcons Park	06:00
26/10/97	Sun	Wollongong City	Newcastle Breakers	Brandon Park	06:30
26/10/97	Sun	South Melbourne	UTS Olympic	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00
26/10/97	Sun	West Adelaide	Canberra Cosmos	tba	03:00

Round 5

31/10/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	Perth Glory	Topper Stadium	07:30
01/11/97	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	Adelaide City	Seiffert Oval	07:30
01/11/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	Carlton SC	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
01/11/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	South Melbourne	Marconi Stadium	07:00
02/11/97	Sun	Melbourne Knights	Sydney United	Knights Stadium	06:00
02/11/97	Sun	West Adelaide	Gippsland Falcons	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30
02/11/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Wollongong City	Bermore Spts Grd	06:30

Round 6

07/11/97	Fri	Gippsland Falcons	Canberra Cosmos	Falcons Park	07:30
07/11/97	Fri	Sydney United	Newcastle Breakers	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
08/11/97	Sat	Carlton SC	Melbourne Knights	Optus Oval	05:00
09/11/97	Sun	Perth Glory	UTS Olympic	Perth Oval	04:00
09/11/97	Sun	South Melbourne	West Adelaide	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00
09/11/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Brisbane Strikers	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30
09/11/97	Sun	Wollongong City	Marconi Fairfield	Brandon Park	06:30

Round 7

14/11/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	Carlton SC	Topper Stadium	07:30
15/11/97	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	Brisbane Strikers	Seiffert Oval	07:00
15/11/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	Perth Glory	Marconi Stadium	07:00
15/11/97	Sat	Gippsland Falcons	South Melbourne	Falcons Park	06:00
16/11/97	Sun	West Adelaide	Wollongong City	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30
16/11/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Sydney United	Bermore Spts Grd	06:30
16/11/97	Sun	Melbourne Knights	Adelaide City	Knights Stadium	06:00

Round 8

21/11/97	Fri	Wollongong City	Gippsland Falcons	Brandon Park	07:30
21/11/97	Fri	Sydney United	Marconi Fairfield	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
22/11/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	Melbourne Knights	Optus Oval	07:00
22/11/97	Sat	Carlton SC	UTS Olympic	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
23/11/97	Sun	Perth Glory	West Adelaide	Optus Oval	05:00
23/11/97	Sun	South Melbourne	Canberra Cosmos	Perth Oval	04:00
23/11/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Newcastle Breakers	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00

Round 9

28/11/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	Brisbane Strikers	Topper Stadium	07:30
28/11/97	Fri	Marconi Fairfield	Carlton SC	Marconi Stadium	07:30
28/11/97	Fri	Canberra Cosmos	Melbourne Knights	Seiffert Oval	07:30
30/11/97	Sun	Gippsland Falcons	Perth Glory	Falcons Park	06:00
30/11/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Adelaide City	Belmore Spts Grd	06:30
30/11/97	Sun	South Melbourne	Wollongong City	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00
30/11/97	Sun	West Adelaide	Sydney United	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30

Round 10

05/12/97	Fri	Sydney United	Gippsland Falcons	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
05/12/97	Fri	Melbourne Knights	Newcastle Breakers	Knights Stadium	07:30
06/12/97	Sat	Carlton SC	West Adelaide	Optus Oval	05:30
06/12/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	UTS Olympic	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
07/12/97	Sun	Perth Glory	South Melbourne	Perth Oval	05:00
07/12/97	Sun	Wollongong City	Canberra Cosmos	Brandon Park	06:30
07/12/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Marconi Fairfield	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30

Round 11

13/12/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	Brisbane Strikers	Marconi Stadium	07:00
13/12/97	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	Newcastle Breakers	Seiffert Oval	07:00
13/12/97	Sat	Gippsland Falcons	Carlton SC	Falcons Park	06:00
14/12/97	Sun	South Melbourne	Sydney United	Bob Jane Stadium	06:00
14/12/97	Sun	UTS Olympic	Melbourne Knights	Bermore Spts Grd	06:30
14/12/97	Sun	West Adelaide	Adelaide City	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30
14/12/97	Sun	Perth Glory	Wollongong City	Perth Oval	05:00

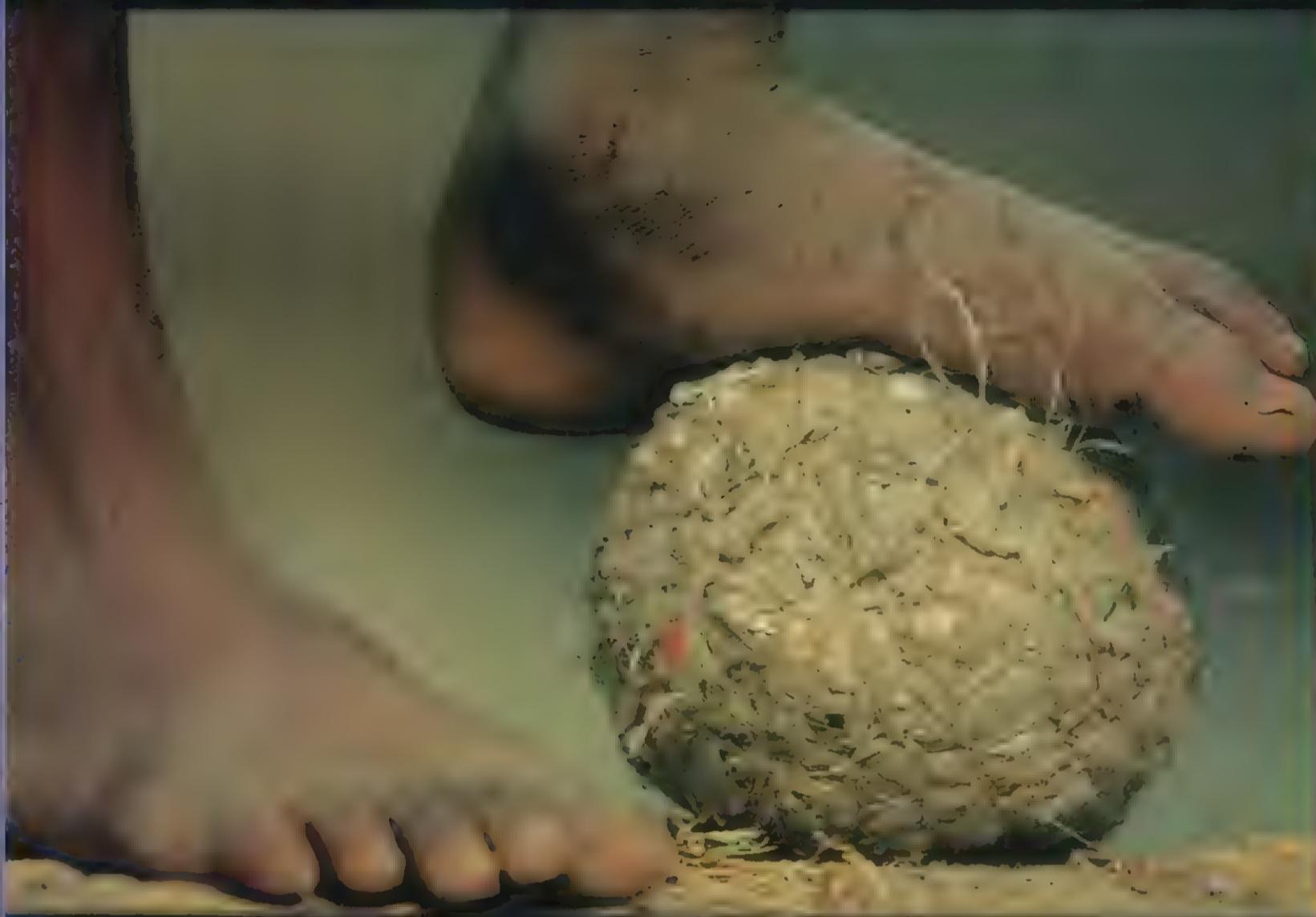
Round 12

19/12/97	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	UTS Olympic	Topper Stadium	07:30
19/12/97	Fri	Sydney United	Wollongong City	Parramatta Stadium	07:30
20/12/97	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	West Adelaide	Suncorp Stadium	07:00
21/12/97	Sun	Carlton SC	South Melbourne	Optus Oval	05:30
21/12/97	Sun	Melbourne Knights	Marconi Fairfield	Knights Stadium	06:00
21/12/97	Sun	Adelaide City	Gippsland Falcons	Hindmarsh Stadium	07:30
21/12/97	Sun	Perth Glory	Canberra Cosmos	Perth Oval	05:00

Round 13

27/12/97	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	Newcastle Breakers	Topper Stadium	07:00
28/12/97	Sun	South Melbourne	Adelaide City	Parramatta Stadium	06:00
28/12/97	Sun	Wollongong City	Carlton SC	Optus Oval	06:30
28/12/97	Sun	Perth Glory	Sydney United	Suncorp Stadium	05:00
28/12/97	Sun	West Adelaide			

From grass roots...



...Grows

AUSTRALIA'S LEADING SOCCER MAGAZINE

SOCER

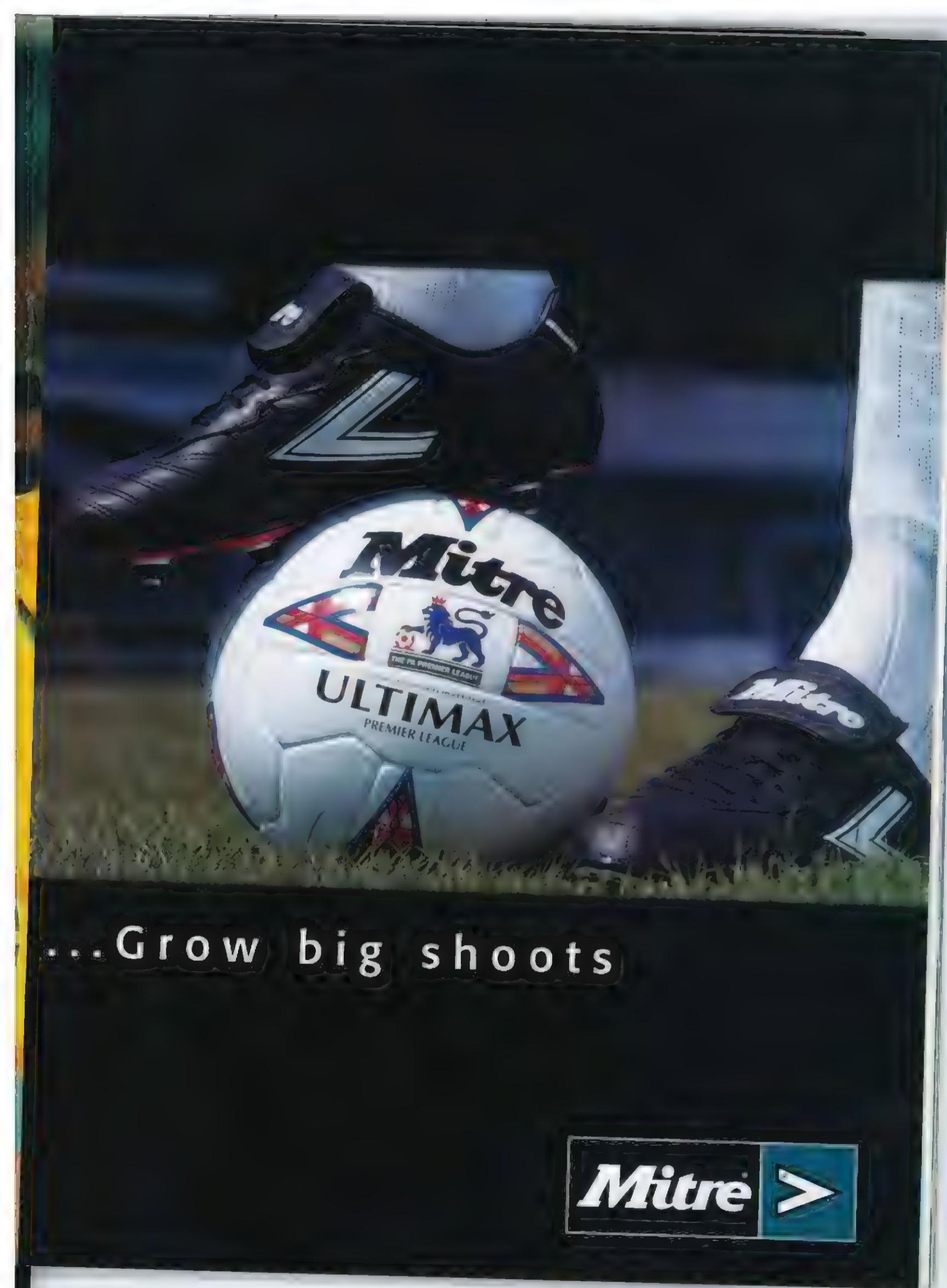
AUSTRALIA



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Ericsson Cup Fixture 1997/98

Round 14

Date	Day	Home	Away	Venue	Kick Off
02/01/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Marconi Fairfield	Topper Stadium
02/01/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	Perth Glory	07:30pm
03/01/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Wollongong City	Parmaatta Stadium
03/01/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Gippsland Falcons	Optus Oval
04/01/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	West Adelaide	Suncorp Stadium
04/01/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	South Melbourne	Hindmarsh Stadium
05/01/98	Mon	Canberra Cosmos	v	UTS Olympic	Seiffert Oval

Round 15

09/01/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	Canberra Cosmos	Parramatta Stadium
10/01/98	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	v	UTS Olympic	Marconi Stadium
10/01/98	Sat	Gippsland Falcons	v	Melbourne Knights	Falcons Park
11/01/98	Sun	South Melbourne	v	Brisbane Strikers	Bob Jane Stadium
11/01/98	Sun	Wollongong City	v	Adelaide City	Brandon Park
11/01/98	Sun	Perth Glory	v	Carlton SC	Perth Oval
11/01/98	Sun	West Adelaide	v	Newcastle Breakers	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 16

16/01/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Gippsland Falcons	Topper Stadium
17/01/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Sydney United	Optus Oval
17/01/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Wollongong City	Suncorp Stadium
17/01/98	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	v	Marconi Fairfield	Seiffert Oval
18/01/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	Perth Glory	Hindmarsh Stadium
18/01/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	South Melbourne	Knights Stadium
18/01/98	Sun	UTS Olympic	v	West Adelaide	Belmore Spts Grd

Round 17

23/01/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	Adelaide City	Parramatta Stadium
24/01/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Canberra Cosmos	Optus Oval
25/01/98	Sun	Wollongong City	v	Melbourne Knights	Brandon Park
25/01/98	Sun	Perth Glory	v	Brisbane Strikers	Perth Oval
25/01/98	Sun	South Melbourne	v	Newcastle Breakers	Bob Jane Stadium
25/01/98	Sun	Gipps and Falcons	v	UTS Olympic	Falcons Park
25/01/98	Sun	West Adelaide	v	Marconi Fairfield	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 18

30/01/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Wollongong City	Topper Stadium
31/01/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Sydney United	Suncorp Stadium
31/01/98	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	v	Gippsland Falcons	Marconi Stadium
31/01/98	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	v	West Adelaide	Seiffert Oval
01/02/98	Sun	UTS Olympic	v	South Melbourne	Perth Oval
01/02/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	Perth Glory	Bob Jane Stadium
01/02/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	Carlton SC	Falcons Park

Round 19

20/02/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	Melbourne Knights	Parramatta Stadium
21/02/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Brisbane Strikers	Optus Oval
22/02/98	Sun	South Melbourne	v	Marconi Fairfield	Brandon Park
22/02/98	Sun	Gipps and Falcons	v	West Adelaide	Falcons Park
22/02/98	Sun	Perth Glory	v	Newcastle Breakers	Perth Oval
22/02/98	Sun	Wollongong City	v	UTS Olympic	Brandons Park
22/02/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	Canberra Cosmos	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 20

27/02/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Sydney United	Topper Stadium
28/02/98	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	v	Wollongong City	Marconi Stadium
28/02/98	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	v	Gippsland Falcons	Seiffert Oval
28/02/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Adelaide City	Suncorp Stadium
01/03/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	Carlton SC	Knights Stadium
01/03/98	Sun	UTS Olympic	v	Perth Glory	Belmore Spts Grd
01/03/98	Sun	West Adelaide	v	South Melbourne	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 21

06/03/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	West Adelaide	Parramatta Stadium
07/03/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Marconi Fairfield	Optus Oval
07/03/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Newcastle Breakers	Suncorp Stadium
08/03/98	Sun	Perth Glory	v	Gippsland Falcons	Perth Oval
08/03/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	Canberra Cosmos	Knights Stadium
08/03/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	JTS Olympic	Belmore Spts Grd
08/03/98	Sun	Wollongong City	v	South Melbourne	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 22

13/03/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Adelaide City	Topper Stadium
14/03/98	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	v	Sydney United	Marconi Stadium
14/03/98	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	v	South Melbourne	Seiffert Oval
15/03/98	Sun	Gippsland Falcons	v	Wollongong City	Falcons Park
15/03/98	Sun	West Adelaide	v	Perth Glory	Hindmarsh Stadium
15/03/98	Sun	Melbourne Knights	v	Brisbane Strikers	Knights Stadium
15/03/98	Sun	UTS Olympic	v	Carlton SC	Belmore Spts Grd

Round 23

20/03/98	Fri	Sydney United	v	UTS Olympic	Parramatta Stadium
21/03/98	Sat	Carlton SC	v	Newcastle Breakers	Optus Oval
21/03/98	Sat	Brisbane Strikers	v	Canberra Cosmos	Suncorp Stadium
22/03/98	Sun	Wollongong City	v	West Adelaide	Seiffert Oval
22/03/98	Sun	Perth Glory	v	Marconi Fairfield	Brandon Park
22/03/98	Sun	Adelaide City	v	Melbourne Knights	Perth Oval
22/03/98	Sun	South Melbourne	v	Gippsland Falcons	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 24

27/03/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Melbourne Knights	Topper Stadium
28/03/98	Sat	Marconi Fairfield	v	Adelaide City	Marconi Stadium
28/03/98	Sat	Canberra Cosmos	v	Wollongong City	Seiffert Oval
29/03/98	Sun	Gippsland Falcons	v	Sydney United	Suncorp Stadium
29/03/98	Sun	UTS Olympic	v	Brisbane Strikers	Brandon Park
29/03/98	Sun	West Adelaide	v	Carlton SC	Perth Oval
29/03/98	Sun	South Melbourne	v	Perth Glory	Hindmarsh Stadium

Round 25

03/04/98	Fri	Newcastle Breakers	v	Canberra Cosmos	Topper Stadium

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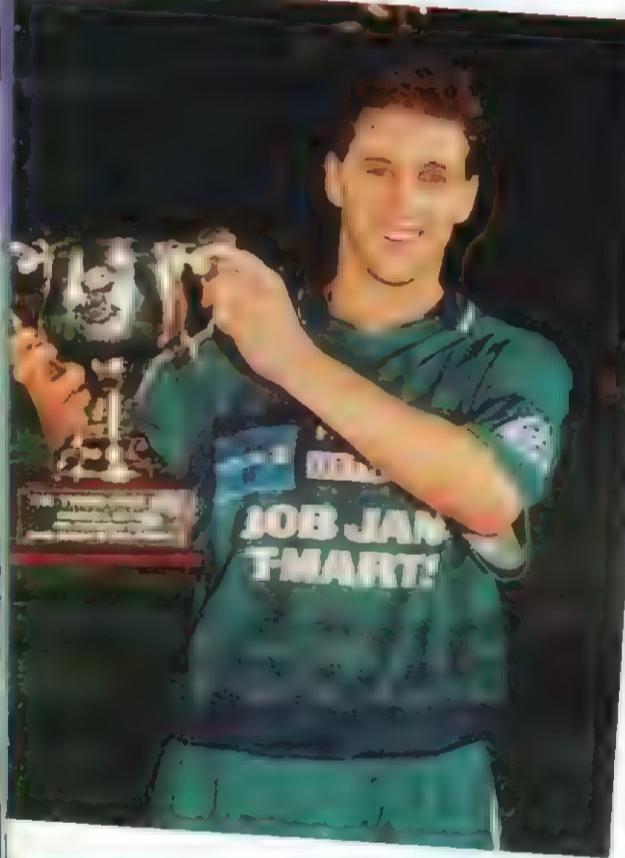
Who are Australia's best locally-based players? Here at Soccer Australia magazine, we decided to bite the bullet and came up with this top 10.

We're constantly being reminded that our best soccer players are leaving in droves for the big money and the glory in Europe, and that the Ericsson Cup is allegedly getting weaker every year.

Certainly any league in the world would miss stars of the calibre of Paul Okon, Ned Zelic, Stan Lazaridis, Mark Viduka etc., but don't forget there's plenty of talent still to be found on Australian playing fields. With this in mind we've chosen the best players currently featuring in the Ericsson Cup, ranking them from one to 10.

We don't expect everyone to agree with our choice, but after all, as a great man once said football is a game of opinions.

No 1 Paul Trimboli - South Melbourne



Good judges tell you that most players are at their peak in their late 20s.

Defenders beware! South Melbourne captain Paul Trimboli will be 28 in February, and with 11 national league seasons under his belt he is ready to lead South Melbourne to their first grand final since 1991.

His NSL record of 82 goals in 295 games can be matched by few strikers let alone midfielders, and his ability to find the net regularly has ensured he is never far from the selectors' minds when it comes to representative duty.

Trimboli scored on his international debut against Fiji in 1988, but it was the crucial World Cup clash against Israel later the same year that saw the fair-haired playmaker hit the headlines. When Australia were 0-1 down against Israel, in what was to be the end of their World Cup run, Arok turned to the subs bench and signalled to the man with the 'goalden' touch.

'Trimmers' did it for Arok again, scoring a dramatic equaliser with only three minutes remaining. That one goal was sadly not enough to rescue Australia, but Trimboli had done enough to secure a top 10 finish in the Oceania player of the year award.

Unfortunately, Trimboli spent the next few years in and out of the Socceroo lineup and it's only been in the last couple of years that the 1993 national league player of the year has really established himself in Australia's starting XI.

Paul was a starter in all three matches during the Optus World Soccer Series in January this year and saw enough action during the Oceania World Cup qualifiers to suggest he can expect more playing time later this year. After the heartbreak of 1989, it seems Trimboli may yet get his chance to perform on the greatest stage of them all.

44

No 2 Kresimir Marusic - Carlton

For Kresimir Marusic, playing at Carlton under Eddie Krnceanic has brought memories of the early 1980s flooding back. While Krnceanic was starring for the Dinamo Zagreb senior team, playing in front of 100,000 crowds in the big derbies, Marusic was a 13-year-old working his way through



the junior ranks.

Fifteen years later, the two are once again at the same club, with Krnceanic managing to convince Marusic his future is at Carlton rather than the host of other Ericsson Cup clubs queueing up for his signature.

The silky-skilled midfielder first came to the attention of Australian fans when he was lured to Melbourne Knights in March 1995 from his native Croatia. Marusic went on to pick up a championship medal after only eight games.

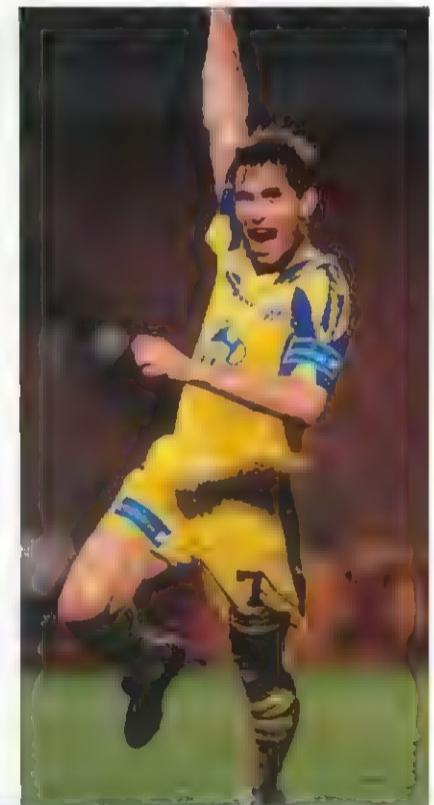
After returning to Croatia briefly, Marusic came back to Australia to play Sydney United and his combination of vision and brilliant passing set up Zdravko Milicic often enough to ensure the cruised to the minor championship. His status as the best player in the league confirmed when he was awarded the Warren medal in May this year.

Marusic may have missed out on his second championship winner's medal that amazing day in front of over 40,000 fans at Suncorp - a match he regards most memorable - but at 27 years of age and as the star turn with the newly-formed Carlton side, it is far too early to put on his trophy cabinet.

No 3 Frank Farina - Brisbane Strikers

One of the true legends of Australian soccer, Farina's return to Australia from Europe has coincided with an explosive interest in soccer in Queensland.

After a glittering career overseas,



top 10

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No 3 Frank Farina - Brisbane Strikers

One of the true legends of Australian soccer, Farina's return to Australia from Europe has coincided with an explosion of interest in soccer in Queensland.

After a glittering career overseas, where

he collected trophies and medals at a furious rate (including Oceania player of the year, top goalscorer and best foreigner trophies in Belgium as well as championship and cup winners medals), the Strikers lured him 'home' to Queensland.

From the moment he put on a yellow shirt there was never any doubt he would succeed Bruce Stowell as coach. The move to player/coach at the end of his first season came earlier than expected but despite an injury-riddled campaign, Farina pushed his team to a double chance in the finals and ultimately, his proudest moment when Brisbane claimed its first national championship. Almost inevitably, Farina scored the opening goal of the grand final in front of a record crowd.

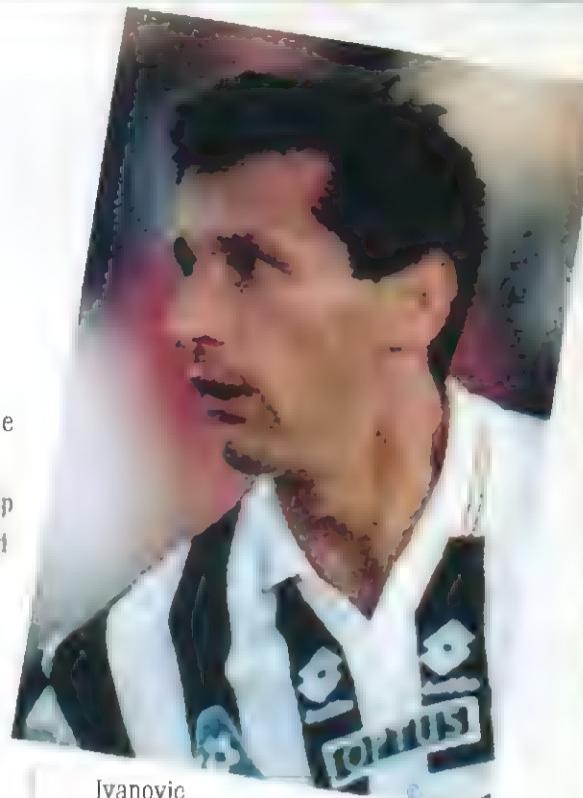
In a sense, the wheel had turned full circle. Farina had picked up a championship winners medal with Marconi in 1988 before embarking on a trailblazing path through Europe.

Farina's playing career, both in Australia and Europe, has been an inspiration to thousands of soccer fans in this country. We can only pray we have the privilege of seeing him for another couple of years yet.

No 4 Milan Ivanovic - Adelaide City

Statistically, Milan Ivanovic ranks as one of our most successful players. The 36 year old's impressive haul of 53 international caps, nearly 250 national league games, and two league championship medals, is reason enough for his inclusion among the A League's finest players.

Yet statistics alone don't do his ability justice and explain why the 1990/91 NSL player of the year is so respected by fans, coaches and players alike.



Ivanovic has been a permanent fixture as Socceroo sweeper since his international debut against Czechoslovakia in 1991. Although his best days may be behind him, he made light work of the Kiwis when stepping in for the injured Steve Horvat during the recent World Cup qualifiers.

His amazingly tight ball control, technical ability and astute football brain, mark the cultured sweeper as a rarity in today's game. Ivanovic's composure and impeccable positioning are world class.

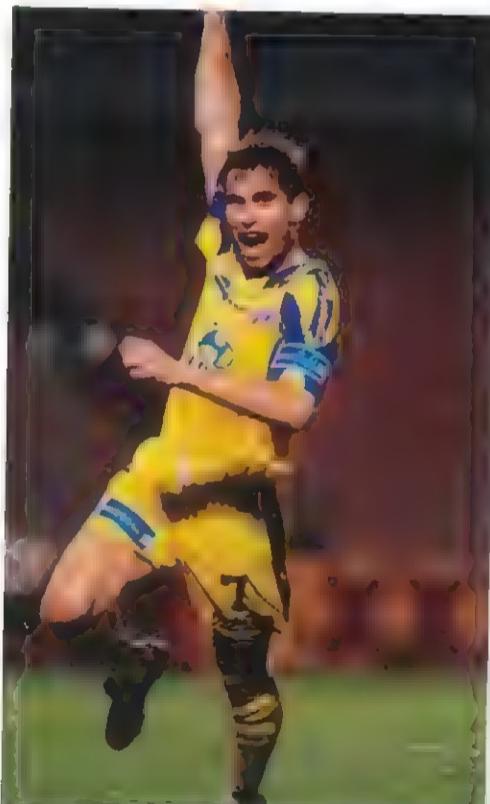
Watching him confidently stride forward, past several tackles, seemingly with the ball on a string while opponents snap at his heels, is one of the finest sights in Australian soccer.

No 5 Andrew Marth - Melbourne Knights

The Melbourne Knights have been powerless to stop most of its dual championship winning stars from moving to more financially lucrative pastures.

Nevertheless they have done everything in their power to keep skipper Andrew Marth at Somers Street. The sighs of relief heard when 'Stabber' signed a two year contract at the beginning of last season were audible through Melbourne's western suburbs.

It re-emphasised the importance of the



AUSTRALIA'S TOP 10



28-year-old to the team's success. This was never better illustrated than last season. Despite carrying an injury for most of the season, Marth, often in great pain, continued playing.

Yet even when less than fully fit Marth is still a fearsome competitor, guaranteed to frighten opponents and inspire teammates in equal measure. His imposing physique, presence and willpower alone make him such an important player.

However, his qualities are not merely combative. In over 200 league games he has scored a more than respectable 36 goals, including three in grand finals. Unfortunately work commitments have, to date, restricted his Socceroo appearance tally.

No 6 Fausto De Amicis - South Melbourne

The transfer of Fausto De Amicis to South Melbourne from cross-town rivals Melbourne Knights at the beginning of last



season didn't raise too many eyebrows among the Lakers faithful, but it's a measure of the 29-year-old's impact that by the end of the season he was rivalling Paul Trimboli as the Lakers' player of the season, and was on the verge of international selection.

De Amicis won two championship medals with the Knights before his cross-town transfer. Going to a young Lakers side that had struggled in 1995/96 (and was being rebuilt by Angie Postecoglou) allowed Fausto to showcase his immense talent and receive the recognition his performances merited.

His phenomenal speed, willingness to attack and ability to put over pinpoint crosses, make him an ideal modern wing back.

Despite his stature, his tackling is fierce and coupled with superb positioning and an astute footballing brain, ensured that few opponents got the better of him in 1996/97.

To no great surprise Fausto has also excelled as a sweeper when required, suggesting his versatility could just force Terry Venables to give him a call later this year.

No 7 Alex Tobin - Adelaide City

Playing alongside the eye-catching Milan Ivanovic might mean that Tobin doesn't get the public acclaim afforded to his Adelaide City teammate or some Socceroos; but ask the coaches who have built their sides around his dependability, or the teammates who have been inspired by his example, and you can be certain that he has no shortage of admirers within the game.

The quietly spoken left footer has been an integral part of three Adelaide City championship sides. Tobin's imposing ability in the air, impeccable positioning and tight marking have earned him a reputation as an extremely difficult opponent at both club and international levels, as Argentine superstars Balbo and Batistuta discovered first hand during the 1993 World Cup qualifiers.



His reliability and even temperament have also made him an ideal leader when acting as Socceroo captain.

Terry Venables has been quick to recognise Tobin's leadership qualities.

No 8 Lubo Lapsansky - Carlton

Lubo Lapsansky is quite possibly the most underrated player in the Ericsson Cup. When Lapsansky first arrived in Australia from Slovakia in 1994 he had a brief spell at North Geelong before being snapped up by the Melbourne Knights for the 94/95 season.

He immediately cemented a first team place, keeping the midfield ticking over and allowing the likes of Biskic and Marusic the freedom to roam the midfield setting up scoring opportunities.

Sadly, Lubo missed the 1995 grand final against Adelaide City through suspension but made amends the following season at Olympic Park against Marconi.

Now that his partnership with Marusic has been rekindled at Carlton, Melbourne



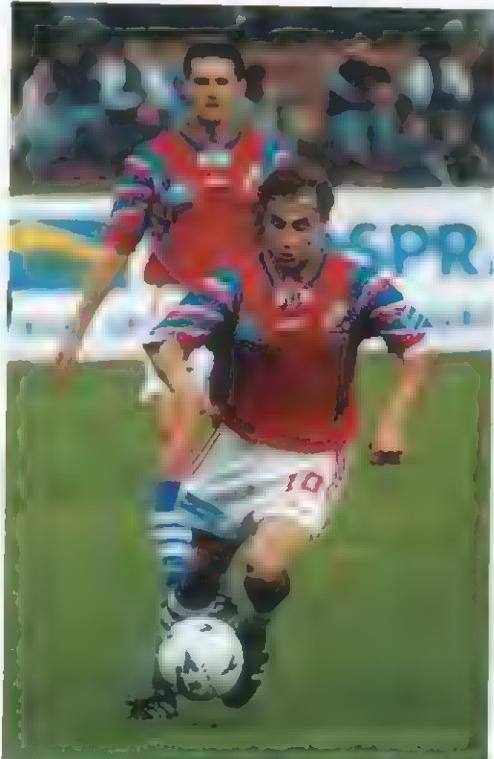
fans can look forward to seeing one of the most creative midfield combinations in the league, and at only 25 years of age Lapsansky may just turn out to be the shrewdest purchase.

No 9 Alan Hunter - Carlton

It took 16 years for Alan Hunter finally get his first championship medal if anyone thinks achieving his lifelong ambition has prompted thoughts of retirement they are sadly mistaken new goal is to win the championship with Carlton, and once he recovers from operation he will slot into a team which many observers consider 'good value' for the finals berth.

Alan first tasted national league football in 1981 with the Brisbane Lions, a time he moved to Heidelberg five years ago. He had picked up an NSL cup winner and the NSL under 21 player of the year award. Next stop was Sydney City, where he made his grand final appearance against Manly. He was to find a championship medal just out of his grasp in a penalty shoot-out.

After selection in the 1988 Olympic Games squad he seemed set for a European career but broke his leg



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Alan first tasted national league action in 1981 with the Brisbane Lions, and by the time he moved to Heidelberg five years later he had picked up an NSL cup winners medal and the NSL under 21 player of the year award. Next stop was Sydney Croatia and a grand final appearance against Marconi, but he was to find a championship medal slip from his grasp in a penalty shoot-out.

After selection in the 1988 Olympic Games squad he seemed set for a European career but broke his leg while



trialling

in Holland. Upon returning to Australia he spent a season on loan at Parramatta.

Hunter then returned home to Brisbane and has spent the last six seasons putting Queensland firmly on the soccer map. With that objective now fulfilled, it's time for Hunter to make his mark with the Blues. His new club's early defensive displays have shown that Alan's experience will be needed to stabilise what could be Carlton's achilles heel in its debut season.

Keeping in mind most champion teams are based on a sound defence, with 335 NSL matches under his belt Hunter's presence at the back this season cannot be underestimated.

No 10 Sean Cranney - Brisbane Strikers

Sean Cranney's career thus far has consisted of a series of false starts. Just as he seemed ready to make an impact on the international stage he has somehow managed to miss his chance at stardom through injury.

In 1993 he should have been a member of the team that went to the semi finals, but he suffered a cartilage tear during the semi-final match against Russia and missed the tournament. Three years later he missed the Olympic qualifiers consequently missing a trip to the US due to a leg injury.

This blow was an especially hard one as he had been a member of the national squad since early '94 and had made his senior international debut against New Zealand in November 1995.

Cranney finally got his day in front of 40,000 last May when his midfield running and accurate passing caused problems for the league's best defence. Having realised his potential at a domestic level, it is simply a matter of time before Sean establishes himself on the international stage.



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Adelaide

The success of one-club cities

Brisbane and Perth last season has led to speculation about Adelaide City and West Adelaide's future. We sent RAY GATT deep into Adelaide soccer territory to gauge the local reaction to a possible South Australian merger.

When the features editor of this magazine asked me to consider doing this story it ran through my mind that this was a sinister way of trying to get rid of me.



Adelaide City takes on West Adelaide. Are the days of the Adelaide derby numbered?

"Ray," he started. "I'd like you to do a piece on the possibility of only one team from South Australia playing in the national league in the future. See what sort of reaction you get to suggestions Adelaide City and West Adelaide should merge to form a united team."

I thought he was joking at first, but the sadist wasn't laughing on the other end of the telephone.

"I think it'll be a good story and we'll get a lot of reaction," he sniggered.

Reaction? That's putting it mildly.

If you want to be hung, drawn, quartered and thrown under a train then try telling South Australian soccer fans there should only be one team in Adelaide. But, hey, I'm only the messenger. Don't shoot me.

The line of thinking is that in these days of rationalisation in sport in Australia, it is no longer feasible to overload competitions with too many clubs.

While trying to expand into new areas, especially interstate, various sporting bodies are also looking to restrict the size of their competitions. Quality, not quantity, is the buzz phrase these days.

Australian soccer is no different. With more of our young players being lured overseas, the talent base here is shrinking alarmingly. It's got to the sad stage that we'll soon have to say: "Will the last player to leave the country

please turn off the lights."

It has got to the stage where too many national league clubs are vying for too few players. As I have been saying for years, the game here cannot sustain a 14-team competition.

And that has to lead to much-needed rationalisation.

Where once the strength of the national league depended on New South Wales and Victoria providing the bulk of the teams, the events of the last couple of seasons suggest the tide has turned.

That's why one-team cities are showing the way. Look at the Sydney Swans and Brisbane Lions in the AFL, the ACT Brumbies in rugby union and Auckland Warriors and Adelaide Rams in rugby league.

They virtually have the market to themselves in their own areas. They are not competing with fellow clubs for the sponsorship dollar. Sponsors, in turn, get better value for money by having their name associated with one entity.

And Australian soccer is starting to catch on as the success of Brisbane Strikers and Perth Glory proved last season.

In their initial season, the Glory exceeded all expectations. While narrowly missing out on the top six, Perth showed what can happen when you get your act together.

Thanks to some expert leadership from Nick Tana and Paul Afkos and some super marketing, the whole city has got behind the Glory. It's Perth's soccer team, make no mistake.

Their home crowds were stunning and averaged over 11,000. And it will only get better.

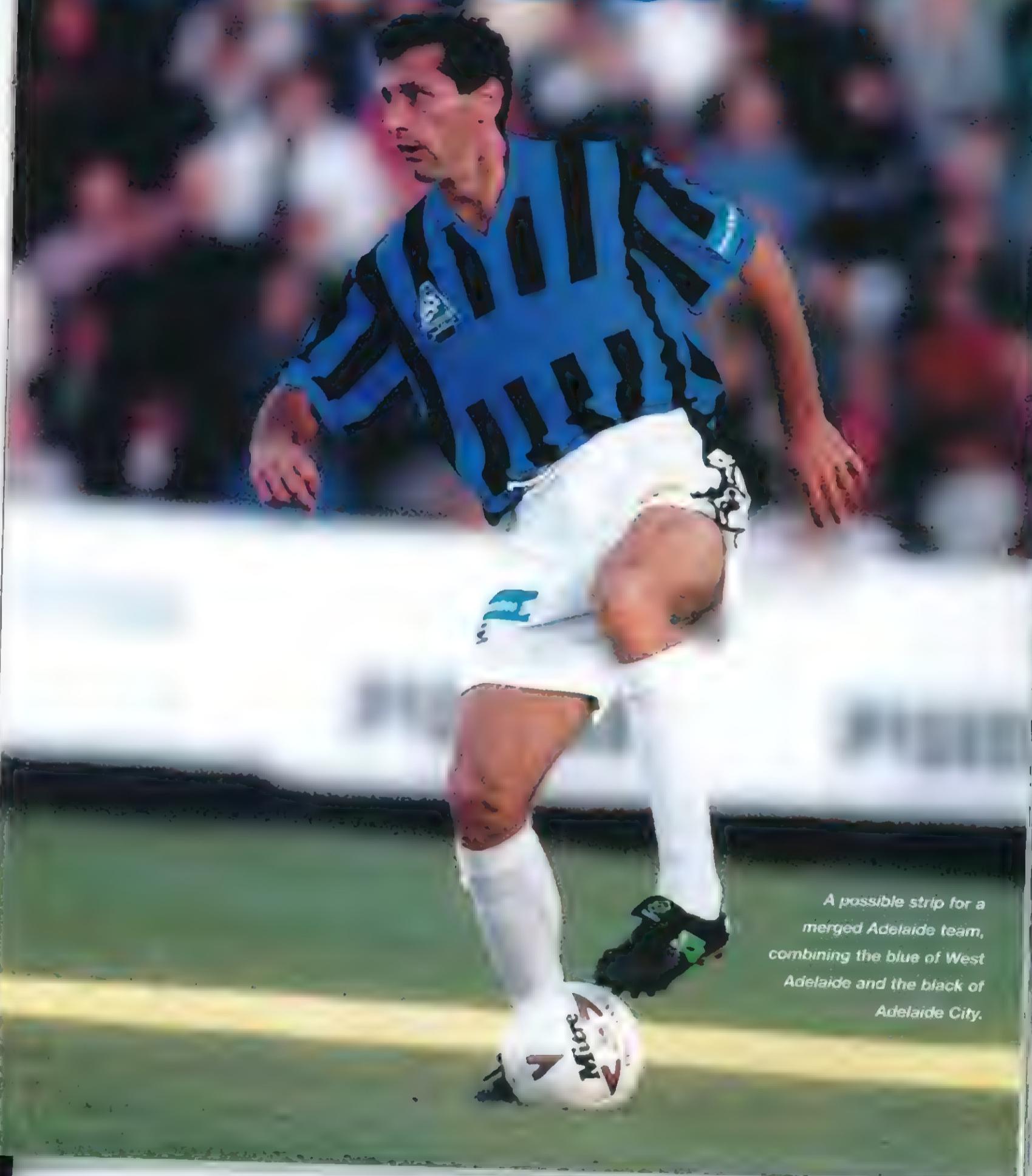
On the other side, could Perth sustain another national team? Not likely.

In Brisbane's case, their regular home attendances at Suncorp Stadium were nothing to write home about, but the Queenslanders showcased the potential of soccer when they attracted a record 40,000 crowd to the NSL Grand Final in May.

Again Brisbane might not be able to sustain a second team, although there is a good case for a club to be formed in North Queensland, where they are starved of top quality sport of any kind.

On the flip side, there are cities which are quite comfortably handling two teams in the one code, as has been shown by the AFL

United?



*A possible strip for a
merged Adelaide team,
combining the blue of West
Adelaide and the black of
Adelaide City.*

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MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

through Perth, where the West and Fremantle co-exist and Ade Crows and Port Adelaide.

So where does that leave a soccer city like Adelaide which I the Italian-orientated Adelaide Greek-based West Adelaide since national league kicked off in 1995.

National league general manager Kamasz hedged a little and chose carefully, very carefully, when w the matter. He has been around to know that the subject should with caution.

Kamasz believes there is room for Adelaide soccer teams in the big there's a proviso.

"There's no push from Soccer force the two clubs to amalgamate know they need to re invent or themselves," Kamasz insisted. "I evidence it is happening.

"I think both clubs understand to broaden their bases and mark themselves differently."

West Adelaide have already increased their membership with a view to the name of the team to the Ade

"The membership seemed fine chief executive Jim Mavratzas said have given us the go-ahead to do think is right."

As for the one town, one club had a little bit of a chuckle.

"West Adelaide and Adelaide co-existed quite well over the years I don't see any need to change," he only have to look at our attendance I think both clubs have done well get about 4500 per home game.

"If we were to merge would I would get 9000 per game? I don't The other problem is that any mean Adelaide would then only I match every two weeks. I think the Australians deserve better."

One Adelaide City identity, which want to be named, was quite individual one would expect, when the idea amalgamation was suggested to him.

"You're having a lend of me, a he said.

through Perth, where the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle co-exist and Adelaide with the Crows and Port Adelaide.

So where does that leave a renowned soccer city like Adelaide which has hosted the Italian-orientated Adelaide City and the Greek-based West Adelaide since the national league kicked off in 1977?

National league general manager Stefan Kamasz hedged a little and chose his words carefully, very carefully, when we discussed the matter. He has been around long enough to know that the subject should be broached with caution.

Kamasz believes there is room for two Adelaide soccer teams in the big time. But there's a proviso.

"There's no push from Soccer Australia to force the two clubs to amalgamate but they know they need to re-invent or re-define themselves," Kamasz insisted. "And there is evidence it is happening."

"I think both clubs understand the need to broaden their bases and market themselves differently."

West Adelaide have already approached their membership with a view to changing the name of the team to the Adelaide Sharks.

"The membership seemed fine about it," chief executive Jim Mavratzas said. "They have given us the go-ahead to do what we think is right."

As for the one town, one club theory, Jim had a little bit of a chuckle.

"West Adelaide and Adelaide City have co-existed quite well over the years and I don't see any need to change," he said. "You only have to look at our attendance figures. I think both clubs have done well. We both get about 4500 per home game."

"If we were to merge would it mean we would get 9000 per game? I don't think so. The other problem is that any merger would mean Adelaide would then only have one match every two weeks. I think South Australians deserve better."

One Adelaide City identity, who did not want to be named, was quite indignant, as one would expect, when the idea of amalgamation was suggested to him.

"You're having a lend of me, aren't you?" he said.

"No," I replied. "Look, I'm only trying to gauge what sort of reaction it would get."

"I don't think too many people will argue that Adelaide is the number one soccer city in this country," he said. "We've got two NSL clubs with terrific support and the game gets outstanding media coverage from all sections."

"How could anyone seriously suggest City and West Adelaide get together?"

"We have survived quite well independent of each other and will continue to do so for some time to come."

He might be right.

Besides, it's a known fact that Sharks and Zebras don't get on.

THE BLAKE VIEW

Colleague Ray Gatt sums it up most succinctly. Anyone going public on a pro-Adelaide City and West Adelaide merger would be committing political suicide. No-one was prepared to go on the record for this story.

Merger is still a dirty word.

But the rumour mill did stir this year and I believe there were some unofficial and very much off-the-record preliminary discussions between heavyweights from within the local soccer community over a couple of hardy red wines.

That's as far as it has gone, at least to date.

Be assured that Soccer Australia would favour such a move.

There are no hidden agendas here; it is an open secret that the governing body is happy for natural attrition to claim at least one of its Ericsson Cup clubs in both Melbourne and Sydney.

Soccer Australia would also like to emulate the huge success of 1996/97 debutants Perth Glory and the grand final box office of Brisbane by duplicating the one town-one team concept wherever practical.

But a merger manipulated by SA is still out of the question.

"No, I don't believe that could be achieved," admitted one source close to Soccer Australia.

There is more likelihood of a new entity - a la Perth Glory - becoming a player on the Adelaide scene.

"The arguments put forward against such a (merger) plan (for Adelaide) are not substantial enough to stop more progressive thinkers from considering their options," said the source.

Influential people have watched the successes of Perth and Brisbane and are prepared to follow their lead.

"It is naive to argue that 4000 people go to Adelaide City games and another 4000 watch West Adelaide but that doesn't mean 8000 will support a combined team."

"The business people who are looking at the possibilities are looking beyond that and trying to extend the boundaries."

"They are talking about an Adelaide-based team which will draw 20,000 or 25,000 people."

No doubt, the success of Perth and predicted non-ethnic based success of 1997/98 debutant Carlton has raised the stakes considerably.

But, if there was ever even a slight consideration of a merger between the two well-entrenched and historically successful Adelaide clubs, it is no closer to reality than it has been at any time in the past.

"Total bullshit," was the response of one Adelaide City stalwart. "Not in this generation, not in the next hundred years. Basically their respective backgrounds would always prevent this becoming a possibility."

"Yes, the two clubs have built a closer relationship in recent years, but a merger, never. It would be like trying to merge (AFL giants) Collingwood and Carlton."

The scary prospect for both the Sharks and the Zebras is that their perceived differences might eventually see them entwined anyway, both mangled together under the wheels of seemingly inevitable progress.

That's certainly something no-one wishes to talk about.

- GREG BLAKE

SOCER AUSTRALIA NUMBER 3

A SOCCER AUSTRALIA PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

"We drove for three hours across Bali, and a lovely land with some equally beautiful different scenes which repeat over in astonishingly predictable rhythms." MARGARET MEAD, 'Letter from Bali', 1936.

Bali !!! The very name conjures up swaying palms, balmy breezes, lush verdant layered rice fields cascading down green-covered hillsides.

In the mind's eye one sees beauty carved sandstone temples in front of young girls attired in rich brocades, panibedecked headgear move gracefully, tinkling sounds of a gamelan orchestra, fierce-looking demons, often in equally colorful costumes, act out their classic seq-

The traditional imagery continues in most artistic and romantic aspects of South East Asia of skilled woodcarvers, magnificently detailed portrayals of deities and other splendid figures, of gift-givers whose skills were handed down from son and mother to daughter, of maidens, steep mountains and golden sunsets, huge, rolling surf pounding its way to shore.

A recent week in Bali convinced us that reality was even better than the images in those visitors who have to fly half the world to get here don't seem to mind the long journey, and returned home still talking about the experience.

Departing at Bali's Denpasar airport at the beginning of the drive towards Kuta I was struck by the beauty of the countryside I did not yet reveal any delights in store for us the following day. We left the typical Asian small-airport scene behind, the scenery I remembered from earlier trips took over, but with subtle, altered features. Downtown houses were now more modern, shop windows contained international imports, and roads that had been dirt tracks just a few years ago were now modern paved roads.

Clearly, the improved infrastructure greatly bettered the quality of life for the Balinese. Streets were now spotless, smelly, open drains gone. Yet my strongest impressions were that the lifestyle, custom-



"We drove for three hours straight across Bali, and a lovely land it is. With some equally beautiful and different scenes which repeat over and over in astonishing and unpredictable rhythms." MARGARET MEAD, 'Letter from Bali', 29 April 1936.

Bali !!! The very name conjures up visions of swaying palms, balmy breezes, lush jungles and verdant layered rice fields cascading down greencovered hillsides.

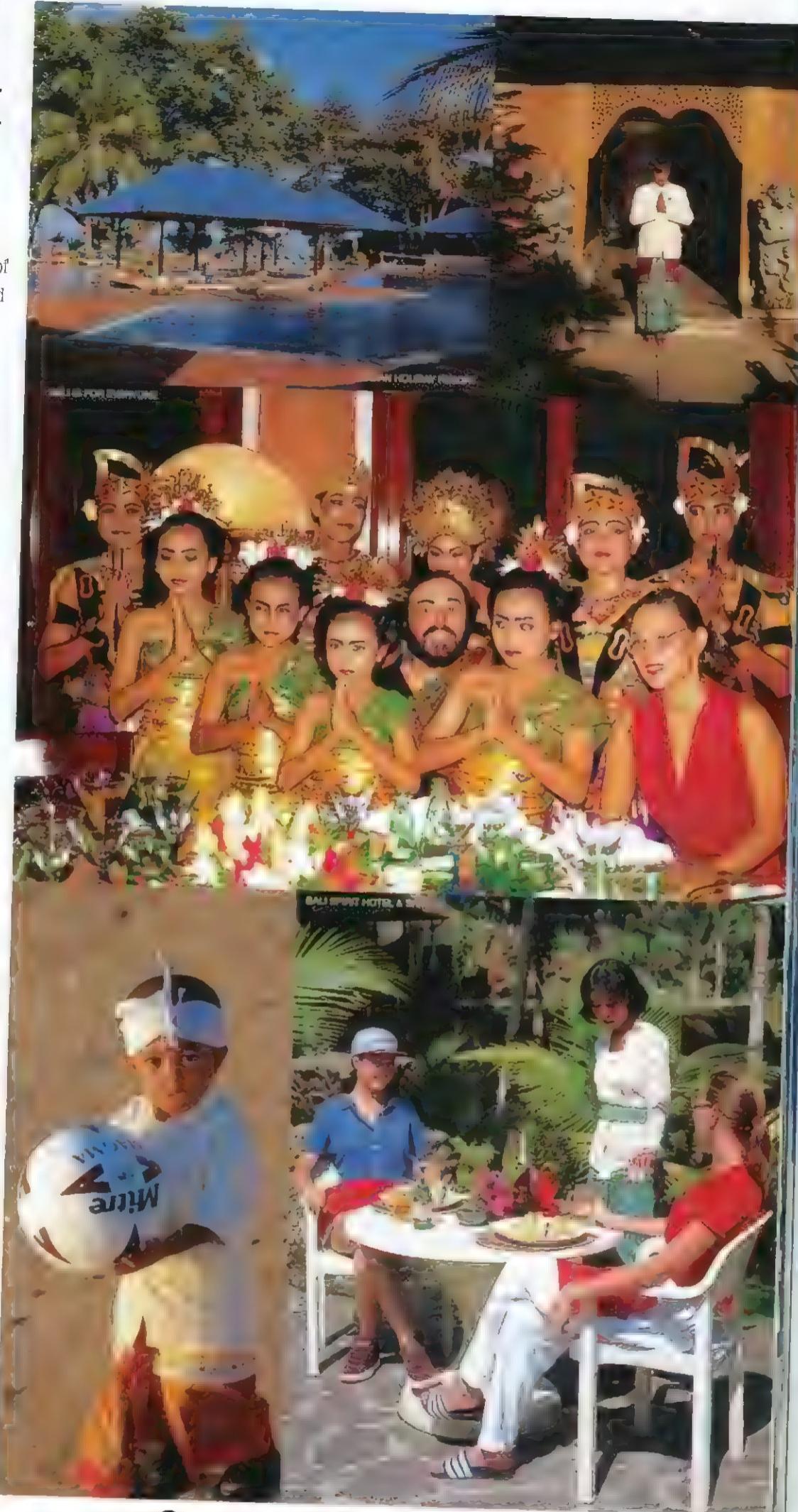
In the mind's eye one sees beautifully carved sandstone temples in front of which young girls attired in rich brocades and frangi panibedecked headgear move gracefully to the tinkling sounds of a gamelan orchestra, while fiercelooking demons, often in equally splendid costumes, act out their classic sequences.

The traditional imagery continues with the most artistic and romantic aspects of life in South East Asia of skilled woodcarvers creating magnificently detailed portrayals of Garudas and other splendid figures, of gifted painters whose skills were handed down from father to son and mother to daughter, of majestic volcanoes, steep mountains and golden beaches with huge, rolling surf pounding its way towards the shore.

A recent week in Bali convinced me that the reality was even better than the image. Even those visitors who have to fly halfway around the world to get here don't seem to regret the long journey, and returned home starryeyed about the experience.

Deplaning at Bali's Denpasar airport and beginning the drive towards Kuta Beach, the countryside did not yet reveal any hints of the delights in store for us the following week. As we left the typical Asian smallairport complex, the scenery I remembered from earlier visits took over, but with subtle, altered details. The downtown houses were now more solid and modern, shop windows contained more international imports, and roads that had been tracks just a few years ago were now modern bitumen.

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ues of the people had not changed that life was still centred around the family, the village, and the traditions that all combine to make Bali unique.

Since the turn of the Century painters, writers and poets have been drawn to Bali's unique charm and culture. This island is predominantly Hindu, the only such enclave in a primarily Moslem part of South-East Asia. Over the centuries the Hindu religion, with its stone and wood Temple carvings and its paintings have honed the natural artistic talents of the Balinese.

Eventually these have reached an apex in which religion, village life, the Balinese Arts, along with the religion-based dances have become inseparable and important facets of the Balinese lifestyle.

This remarkably artistic culture is set in a tropical paradise of smouldering volcanoes, emerald-green terraced ricefields, brilliantly-hued flowers and villages where smiling Balinese live a community-based lifestyle little changed from that of their ancestors.

And there's so much to do and see on this island. Catch the surf along Bali's pristine beaches. Shop for magnificent wood-carvings, silverware or traditional paintings and masks. Go hiking in the West Bali National Park or climb to Pura Besakih, the closest spot to the 3000 meter Mt. Agung. Watch Bali's legendary woodcarvers in the village of Mas - listen to a gamelan orchestra and see the traditional dancing in the village of Peliatan. Visit the artists' village of Pengosekan, buy a Barong mask at Ubud market, walk down Monkey Forest Road at Ubud and look at the extraordinary handicrafts.

Ubud is a mountainside village and the centre for the arts for which Bali is so famous. Woodcarving, handloom-weaving, painting, mask-making, silver-smithing, and stone-carving - all absolutely thrive here. These crafts are an integral part of the Balinese tradition and Hindu religion and anyone staying in Ubud - usually 2 or 3 days in conjunction with 4 or 5 days at a beach resort - will find the natural way in which all of these people practice their crafts quite fantastic.

When it comes to Art as well as relaxation, Bali has it all.



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Top page:
Top Left - Kevin Kanzler Adidas shorts & 1/2 zip 3 stripe
long-sleeve. Balle' Breakaway Red/Blue dress
Mitre Soccer vest
Bottom left - Adidas 3 stripe dress Black/White Mitre 3 stripe
vest 1/2 zip 10. Mitre 3 stripe knit shorts
Balle' Breakaway Yellow/Black Polyester Jersey
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A white Merpati Nusantara Airlines airplane is shown flying over a tropical beach. The plane's tail features the airline's name "Merpati" in blue script. The background consists of a bright blue sky and a sandy beach with palm trees.

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Duelling Pianos

It's great to see Soccer Australia adopting a genuinely creative approach to promoting the World Cup qualifiers. They decided to launch the second leg of their encounter with New Zealand by staging their media press conference in the Piano Bar at Sydney Airport.

This was not only a great opportunity to analyse, discuss and speculate about the upcoming game but also allowed El Tel and his assistant, Raul Blanco, to indulge in another love - cabaret performing.

The show commenced with a number described as 'The Duelling Pianos'. Venables was manic in his version of Jerry Lee Lewis' 'Great Balls Of Fire' and went head-to-head with Blanco's fervent rendition of Elton John's 'Crocodile Rock'.

But the show stopper definitely belonged to Venables with a masterful performance of Peter Allen's 'I Go To Rio'. His unbuttoned Hawaiian shirt, white slacks, sneakers and vibrating maracas certainly set the mood, but it was his sultry, gyrating ample physique smothering the Soccer Australia virgin white piano, that set the place alight.

There was one down side to the floorshow, however. We felt that his melancholy version of 'I Still Call Australia Home' lacked something.

SOCER AUSTRALIA - NOVEMBER '97

The Four Diegos

Melbourne radio celebrities The Four Diegos take a look at the lighter side of the world game.

Bonsai, Mr Venables

If you think that the Socceroo World Cup two-legged affair against the fourth placed Asian team in November is a mere formality, think again!

A quote from a Tokyo educationalist seems to suggest the spirit of kamikaze and honourably dying for a cause is still prevalent in the teachings of the land of the big red sun, Japan.

"We wish to make it clear that ordering pupils to commit hara-kiri is no longer acceptable."

This was reinforced by authorities after-



a teacher gave two boys knives and told them to disembowel themselves for not sharing their sweets. Bonsai, Mr Venables!

66

The Four Diegos ask their Hall of Fame guests the hard questions...

Martin Tyler - world famous soccer commentator

The Diegos: In Australian Rules football we recently had an incident where one player grabbed the testicles of another player on the ground.

Now you're a great commentator and wordsmith, how do you think you'd describe a similar incident on the soccer field?

Tyler: One of the wonderful things about television is that a picture tells a thousand words. If it was clear what had happened for everybody to see, I might have just drawn breath and maybe winced slightly into the microphone and let everyone make up their own mind.

I have heard about the incident in the Aussie rules game - it made a bit of a splash over here. These things happen, I guess. I suppose it's not the done thing man to man. Happily it doesn't happen a lot and thankfully I'm not put into that situation too often.

Kimon Taliadoros - strike now-defunct Collingwood Soccer Club.

Diegos: A well known newspaper published a photo standing high up on the balcony apartment during the season. pressures that you had to experience with the Collingwood V ever cross your mind to jump

Taliadoros: No, but th because I've been a little irra season.

Gary Marocchi - Perth GI

Diegos: In soccer around time wasting tactics are often teams in a bid to break the concentration of their oppone

FIFA, to some extent, has successful in stamping this ou players by issuing red and yet it looks like you guys at the G come up with the ultimate tim tactic - the streaker! Is this a wasting ploy or part of the pre entertainment on match day?

Marocchi: Well, I must that was one of the most incre that I have ever seen. The streaker actually came out was an Eng champion.

He was out in Australia on I guess he had a few too many quite funny and to see him do in the goal square was a sight

I know it disrupted the ga but it certainly generated som entertainment on the day.

Branko Culina - coach of Canberra Cosmos

Diegos: Now, Branko, if you hold the mantle as the best all the Ericsson Cup coaches respond to the fact that you a to be the most debonair and fi dressed A-League coach?

Culina: Gee, I wasn't av held that tag. I suppose having Melbourne. It must be the cos me.

Kimon Taliadoros - striker for the now-defunct Collingwood Warriors Soccer Club.

Diegos: A well known Melbourne newspaper published a photo of you standing high up on the balcony of your apartment during the season. With the pressures that you had to experience last season with the Collingwood Warriors, did it ever cross your mind to jump and end it all?

Taliadoros: No, but that's only because I've been a little irrational this last season.

Gary Marocchi - Perth Glory coach.

Diegos: In soccer around the world, time wasting tactics are often employed by teams in a bid to break the rhythm and concentration of their opponents.

FIFA, to some extent, has been successful in stamping this out, penalising players by issuing red and yellow cards but it looks like you guys at the Glory have come up with the ultimate time-wasting tactic - the streaker! Is this a Glory time-wasting ploy or part of the pre-match entertainment on match day?

Marocchi: Well, I must tell you that that was one of the most incredible things that I have ever seen. The streaker that actually came out was an English speedway champion

He was out in Australia on holidays and I guess he had a few too many beers. It was quite funny and to see him do a slam dunk in the goal square was a sight.

I know it disrupted the game for a while but it certainly generated some entertainment on the day.

Branko Culina - coach of the Canberra Cosmos

Diegos: Now, Branko, it seems that you hold the mantle as the best dressed of all the Ericsson Cup coaches. How do you respond to the fact that you are considered to be the most debonair and fashionably dressed A-League coach?

Culina: Gee, I wasn't aware that I held that tag. I suppose having come from Melbourne, it must be the cosmopolitan in me.

Diegos: Actually, Branko we adopt the same philosophy about being well-dressed. We demand the best and that's why Delmonte sponsor us. Izzy Dye is a personal friend.

Culina: Before I got to JAG, I did dress myself in Delmonte of Footscray.

Diegos: Well, you know what they say... Looks good, feels good, is good!

Culina: Sure did! I can still feel it.

This month's Mega Hard Question was launched at...

Craig Johnston - former Liverpool player.

Diegos: Craig, we all know that you never played for the Socceroos, but was there ever a time that you were close to wearing the Green and Gold?

Johnston: Well, yeah! This is a big misunderstanding and I've had to wear it for a long time. It actually hurts me because I'm extremely proud of being Australian, I'm extremely proud that I've had a good soccer career and I always wanted to combine the two.

Unfortunately I had no respect for the people who were running Australian soccer because I thought they had their own agenda which wasn't for the best interests of the game. I must say, even now, I very much regret not having played for Australia, but I'm my own person and if I don't like people I won't play for them.

What I've always said is that I want to do something with Australian soccer and I look now at this relatively new

management with the likes of David Hill, George Negus and now, of course, with Terry Venables and the way they have grabbed Australian soccer around the neck and shook it upside down and shook out all the, the um...

Diegos: Dead wood?

Johnston: Dead wood is a pretty good description, thank you. I was going to say parasites...

Diegos: There's a lot of parasites in dead wood, Craig.

Johnston: Exactly! Well now that they have all been shaken out, the icing on the cake is Terry Venables to help make up on all the lost ground and excite everyone from the grass roots, through to the media, the coaches and the players and lift the game higher than it's ever been before.

It really hurts not ever playing for Australia and I wish this management had been there a long time ago and there would not have been a discussion, but they weren't there.



The Four Diegos
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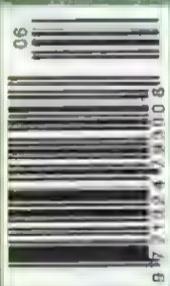
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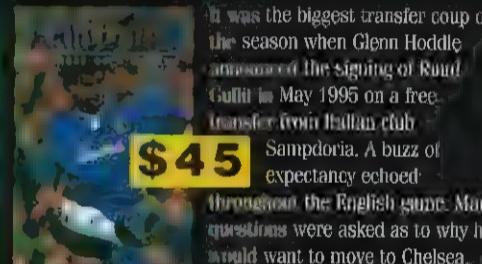
New Socceroo coach Terry Venables is the great enigma of English football. A man surrounded by controversy, he appears to have the capacity to survive anything and everything. This book paints a picture of a man far removed from the somewhat facile image so familiar on the back pages of newspapers and on radio and television. This is a revealing portrait which goes behind the facade and the brilliantly self-projected image of Venables.

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This is the ultimate reference for all lovers of European soccer. With 49 featured nations, from Italy to Lithuania, this information-packed volume features:
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It was the biggest transfer coup of the season when Glenn Hoddle announced the signing of Rudi Gullit in May 1995 on a free transfer from Italian club Sampdoria. A buzz of expectancy echoed throughout the English game. Many questions were asked as to why he would want to move to Chelsea, especially when Gullit could earn more elsewhere. These questions and many more are answered in this intimate portrait of a footsitting genius.

Hand of God is the first ever biography of Diego Maradona. Its subject is one of the world's most controversial and flamboyant sportsmen, arguably the greatest and certainly the most widely-known footballer of the modern age. Hand of God is not only a revealing dissection of a complex sporting genius, but also a compelling insight into the world of exploitation, corruption and intrigue. This is his almost-incredible story.



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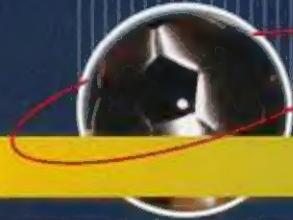
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<http://www.sportserver.com>

This is perhaps the most down-to-earth soccer site you will find. Quite simply, it is an accumulation of soccer news from all over the world as it happens.

No flashy graphics, no video replays of goals, no fancy images. All you will find here is the latest news from anywhere in the world. Who has just signed for a club, who will be suspended for two weeks, the result from the late match last night - it is this up-to-date information which makes Soccer Features a must-visit site.

RETE

<http://www.tin.it/rete>

The Rete site is produced in Italy but is perhaps one of the most international of all Internet sites in existence.

It provides updates on all of the world's domestic competitions  including Australia. In addition, it has recorded results of all matches reaching as far back as the 1920's for many competitions.

One of the major features of this site is the NetCast, when minute-by-minute summaries are shown on screen of particular matches or competitions - predominantly European leagues. Follow one of these reports and one minute you are told Juventus is in attack and

the next minute you can read that Del Piero slammed the ball into the net. If you cannot watch the games on television or listen to the radio, this is definitely the next best thing.

Also, soon after the completion of matches, small Quicktime videos are available of all the highlights including the goals!

What more could you want?

Without a doubt, this is one tremendous site not to neglect.

FIFA

<http://www.fifa.com>

The FIFA home page presents a wealth of soccer information which is what you would expect from the world's governing body.

Within this site you will find all the

latest results and tables plus endless statistics on all FIFA competitions: World Cup, World Youth Championships, Women's World Cup etc.

Also within this site you will gain access to the numerous publications and products exclusively produced and marketed by FIFA, including coaching guides and merchandise.

Throw in all the news on soccer laws, history of competitions, contacts for all nations affiliated with FIFA plus loads more and there is no doubt this is one site you need to bookmark straight away.



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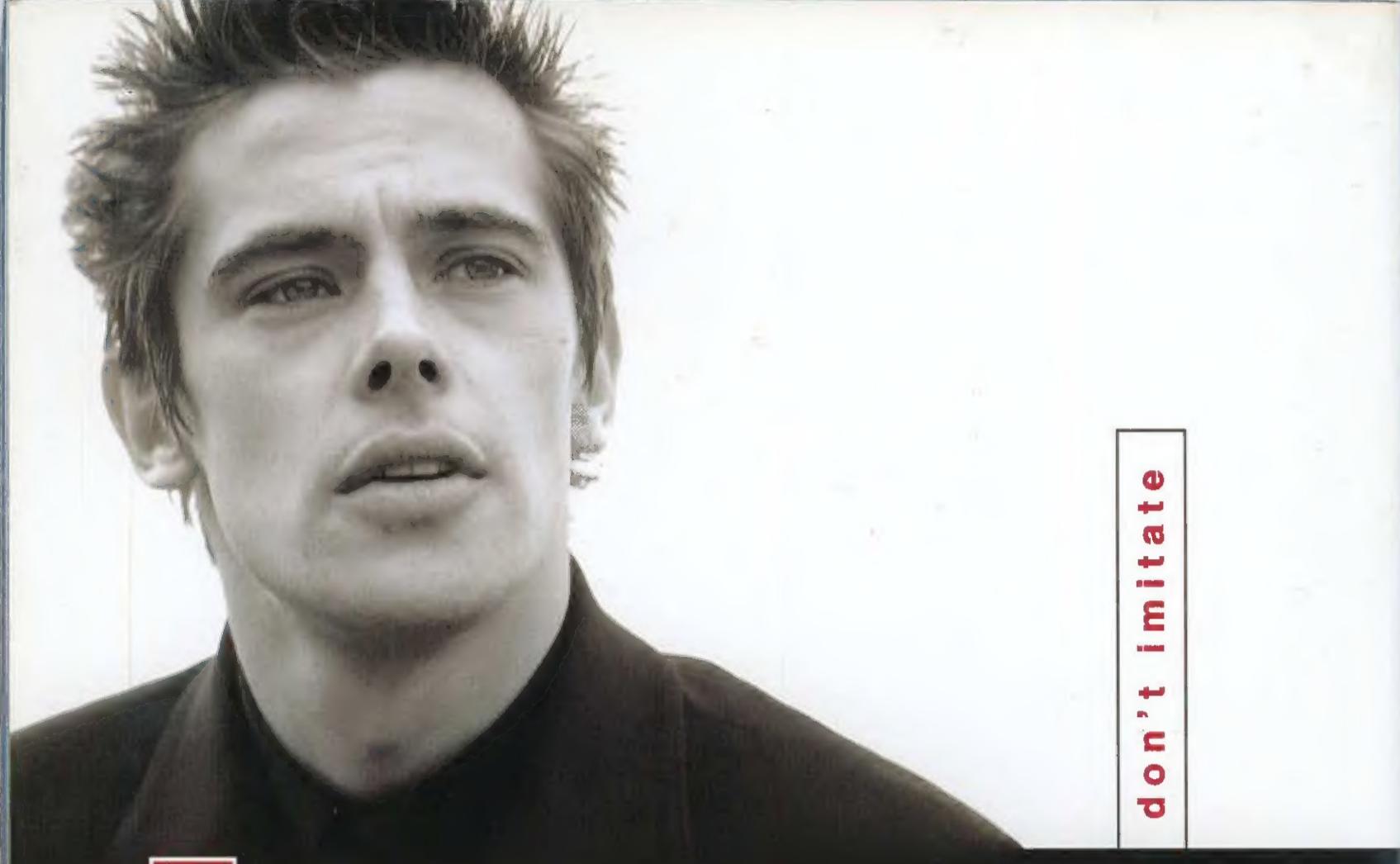
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